# THE THREE MYSTIC PATHS

BY THE EDITORS OF THE SHRINE OF WISDOM

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# THE THREE MYSTIC PATHS

BY

The Editors of the

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# FOREWORD

THE Path of Devotion is essentially the path of the Aspirant, because its object is the finding of God.

It is the Disciple who seeks to serve God; it is the Neophyte who seeks to know God, but before the seeker has earned the right to either of these titles, he must carry the humbler one of Aspirant, in his heart.

To all such is this little book dedicated, and for all such is it sent forth that it may prove a light upon the path that leads to the finding of God.

The Path of Devotion is eminently religious, for it is the means whereby man enters, consciously or unconsciously, into a living relationship with God.

The human nature, *per se*, cannot transcend its own level of limitation, but depends upon a superior principle, not only for Being, but also for Well-Being; not only for the Natural stream of Life, but also for the Supernatural stream of Grace; not only for the power of Intellection, but also for the reception of the Intelligible Itself.

Even if this Principle be conceived as inherent in Man, as a Principle in no wise apart from his true Nature and Selfhood, the necessity still remains of establishing a living relationship with It, and the Path of Devotion as a means to this end is always necessary.

Religion is the binding back of the Soul to God, and the fact that any particular form of religion should fall into disuse or disfavour, in no way mitigates the value of religion itself.

Indeed, that inconsistency that characterizes so many of the activities of man is itself a proof of the impermanence of the human nature, and the need for an ever closer identification with the Immutable Principle behind and within all religious activities.

This little book presents various phases of the Devotional Path which, although treated separately, are all closely associated in the religio-mystical life.

For example, the Spirit of Worship must enter into all Prayer, Meditation and Contemplation, otherwise the tendency will be ego-centric instead of theo-centric. While, on the other hand, the highest acts of worship are alone to be made in contemplative states during which the human nature is brought more and more closely into the Presence of God.

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# A MANUAL ON THE PATH OF DEVOTION

BY

PRAYER, MEDITATION, CONTEMPLATION,
THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD,
AND WORSHIP

PUBLISHED BY
THE SHRINE OF WISDOM

# "PRAYER AND MEDITATION"*

## § 1. NATURE AND OBJECT.

TRUE Prayer and Meditation are in the mystical sense inseparable. Prayer should always proceed and be a part of religious Meditation, which, in turn should be a natural consequence of Prayer and itself produce Contemplation :—

"Reading offers to the mouth Solid Food, Meditation breaks it, Prayer brings out the flavour, and Contemplation is the true sweetness which rejoices and refreshes the heart." (St. Bernard.)

Prayer is the application of the heart and mind to God.

"Meditation is the method by which the Soul seeks God, but when once God has been found, the Soul no longer tries to reason about Him."—(St. Teresa).

Prayer, so to speak, is the preparation of the soil : Meditation is the tilling of it : and Contemplation the beholding of its results.

Meditative Prayer, or Prayerful-Meditation, is not merely the kneeling down at certain times and the recital of certain prescribed words which after constant repetition may become meaningless formalities. Neither is it merely a detailed petition or solicitation, rather is it the yearning of the Soul for union with its Divine Source,—the articulate expression of an ineffable aspiration.

Prayer, or Orison as it has been termed, is supplication, the humble and loving submission of man to his Maker. It is also aspiration, compunction, reverence, adoration, praise, gratitude, communion, invocation, loving desire, oblation, and worship, within and without.

* In the progress of the Soul, religion and mysticism hold places of paramount importance. They are in certain respects comparable to the Art and Science of Divine Concerns. Without Mystical Science we have religion without mysticism. Without Sacred Art we have mysticism without religion. These two factors must stand or fall together, and should they fall there can be little progress in that Practical Idealism which makes the religionist a mystic, and the mystic religious.

## § 2. FORMS OF PRAYER.

(1) As Supplication. The sense of dependance upon what is greater than we are, "all things pray except the First"—(Theodorus).

"Since the Gods excel us both in Power, Purity and all other attributes, we shall act in the most opportune manner by invoking Them with most vehement supplications. For the consciousness of our own nothingness when we compare ourselves with the Divine naturally leads us to the exercise of Prayer." (Iamblichus.)

(2) As Compunction,—arising from sorrow and penitence, and the consciousness of our imperfections :—

"Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink." (Ps. lxxx. 5.)

(3) As Aspiration, voiced or unvoiced, intense yearning, sighing for God and His Eternal Life, Grace and Liberty.

"Prayer especially pertains to worthy men because it is a conjunction with the Divine Nature." . . . "As we are like children torn from our parents, it is proper to pray that we may return to the Blessed Gods, as to our True Parents." (Porphyry.)

(4) As Reverence and Adoration, Divine Fear or Reverential Awe, inspired by meditating the Majesty and Dignity of the Supreme, bowing in adoration before the Lord of all Creation.

(5) As Praise and Gratitude.

(6) As Intercession for others :—

"The lives of men who aspire as I do are all prayer." (Zanoni.)
"Our Prayers should be for blessings for all in general, for the Gods know best what is good for us." (Socrates in "Phaedo.")

It is the Service of others, perfected by prayer.

(7) As Communion, based on the natural desire to commune with that we love, not only communion with God, but also the invocation and spiritual converse with the Great Ones and Saints of all times and all creeds. They are ever at hand to help us, and the 'mind touches what it thinks upon.'

"There is nothing which approaches to kind alliance with the Divine, though in the smallest degree, to which the Divine is not immediately present and united." (Iamblichus.)

But :—

"Invocation does not draw down the pure and impassive Gods to us, but on the contrary, renders us, who are become impure and passive through generation, immutable and pure."—*Ibid.*

(8) As Oblation, spontaneous and joyful self-surrender.

"Draw me unto Thee, O my Divine Centre, by the secret springs of my existence and all my powers and senses shall follow the potent magnetism." (Madame Guyon, "A Short and Easy Method of Prayer.")

Resolution and vows to overcome evil and attain good.

(9) As Loving Desire, or asking, accompanied by effort, for Wisdom, Light, Strength, Grace and everything spiritual, —*i.e.*, opening oneself, not to receive answer to this or that personal petition, but to receive the Christos.

"I, Lord, went wandering like a strayed Sheep, seeking Thee with anxious reasoning, without, whil'st Thou wast within me. I wearied myself much in looking for Thee without and yet Thou hast Thy Habitation within me, if only I desire Thee and pant after Thee." (St. Augustine.)

It is the Love Divine which fills the heart of the lover making it God's Spouse.

## § 3. METHODS AND DEGREES OF MEDITATIVE PRAYER.

The Methods of Prayer, used as a means for introducing the Soul to the Divine, are multiplex, depending upon the all-various conceptions held as to the Nature of God and of the Soul. They also vary according to the motives and attitudes of different temperaments and therefore no one form of Prayer will suit all.

The methods may be.—

(1) The simple automatic movement of the lips in the utterance of Word-Prayer, the sounds of which may or may not be audible and accompanied by mental effort, aspiration or will.

(2) Thought-Prayer.

(3) Heart-Prayer, or voiceless aspiration.

(4) Will-Prayer, or what the Buddhists call Pranidhâna.

The guiding principle in all methods should be that oft-repeated fundamental truth:—"The Kingdom of God is within." Likewise it should be remembered that the prayers of man are not received by God externally as if He possessed human organs and attributes.

"Prayers are not to be directed to the Gods (*i.e.* the aspects of the Inconceivable Supreme) as if They were passive and could be moved by supplication, for the divine irradiation which takes place through Prayer, operates spontaneously and is far removed from all material attraction." . . . "The Gods do not receive prayers in Themselves through any corporeal powers or organs, but rather contain in Themselves the very essence and the effects of pious invocation." (Iamblichus.)

The following briefly summarizes some of the more general methods and degrees of Prayer recognized by mystical writers:

(1) Preparatory. Sacred reading and preliminary meditation on what is read to extract its sweetness; preparing the mind and heart for devotions; inviting divine assistance to prevent distractions; pausing to revere and adore, before entering the Inner Temple of Worship.

(2) First Degree and Method. Vocal, prescribed or spontaneous, audible or not,—the Prayer of Simplicity.

(3) Second Degree and Method.

"Fervent, indrawn, not exclusive of some words, nor unaided by what mystics call discursive acts, *i.e.* the consideration of facts and doctrines prompting to devotion. In this species there is nothing extraordinary,—no mysticism so far." (St. Teresa.)

(4) Third Degree and Method,—in which the Soul engages, as it were, in ardent and familiar converse with its Inner Lord Who moves the Soul in many ways, withdrawing it into Interior Communion, Colloquy and Recollection.

"The discursive faculties are active in Recollection, but the will is supposed to be, as it were, bound and taken up in God. Devotees receive the wondrous sweetness . . . and often dread to move a limb lest bodily exertion should mar the tranquillity of the Soul." (St. Teresa.)

"When the Soul is in its central tendency, or, in other words, is returned through Recollection into itself; from that moment the central attraction becomes a most potent action, infinitely surpassing, in its energy, every other species. Nothing, indeed can equal the swiftness of this tendency to the Centre, and though an action, yet it is so noble, so peaceful, so full of tranquillity, so natural and spontaneous, that it appears to the Soul as if it did not act at all." (Madame Guyon.)

It is the perfection of the Prayer of Silence, first the words, then the desires and thoughts, are silenced: by the first Silence—of words, Virtue is acquired; by the second Silence—of desires, Quietness is obtained, and by the third Silence—of thoughts, Internal Recollection is attained.

## § 4. THE EFFECTS OF PRAYER.

These can be grouped under three headings corresponding to the three paths to Perfection of Purgation, Illumination and Union.

### (1) Purgative.

"Prayer draws forth all practical precepts,—for perfection in prayer does not consist only in the contemplation of divine Things or in interior discourse from which we follow spiritual tastes, but in practice and in work, *i.e.*, in so establishing life rightly that from the practical light of prayer, we are directed and effectively moved to deeds." (From an Appendix to a Latin version of "Imitation of Christ.")

"Prayer is the Guide to Perfection and the Sovereign Good: it delivers us from every vice and obtains for us every virtue." (Madame Guyon.)

"Through Prayer the summit of moral excellence, the holiness which pertains to the Gods, is attained." (Proclus.)

### (2) Illuminative.

"Prayer is an ascent or elevation of the mind to God." (Molinos.)

"The Gods who are perfectly benevolent and merciful, pour Their Light in unenvying abundance upon Theurgists, whose Souls they call upwards to their own Divine Nature." (Iamblichus.)

### (3) Unitive.

"The Spirit of Prayer, which alone can, and never fails, to unite us with the One Only Good and to open Heaven and the Kingdom of God within us." (Wm. Law in "The Spirit of Prayer.")

"The first species of prayer is collective, producing a contact with Divinity and subsisting as a Leader and Light of Knowledge. The second is the bond of consent and communion with the Gods, exciting Them to a copious communication of Their benefits prior to the energy of speech, and perfecting the whole of our operations. The third and most perfect species of Prayer is the source of ineffable union with the Divinity, in Whom it establishes all the power and authority of prayer, and thus causes the Soul to repose in the Gods as in a divine and never-failing Haven. From these three, in which all the Divine measures are contained, suppliant devotion not only conciliates to us the Friendship of Divinity, but supernally extends to us three fruits. The first pertains to illumination, the second to a communion of operation, but through the third we receive a perfect plentitude of Divine Fire. No operation in sacred concerns can succeed without the intervention of prayer. Lastly, the continual exercise of prayer nourishes the vigour of our intellect and renders the receptacles of the Soul far more capacious for the communications of the Gods. It likewise is the Divine Key which unfolds to men the penetralia of the Gods, accustoms them to the splendid rivers of supreme Light, in a short time perfects our inmost recesses and disposes them for the ineffable embrace and contact with the Divine." (Iamblichus,—on "The Mysteries.")

# "CONTEMPLATION"

## § 5. NATURE AND OBJECTS.

THE terms Meditation and Contemplation are often used loosely and synonymously as if they were two names for the same subject. Although, in actual practice, it is difficult to distinguish where Meditation ends and Contemplation begins, there is, nevertheless, a clear distinction between the two states.

Meditation is a state of calm reflection and devotional pondering, often induced by a process of discursive reasoning; whereas Contemplation, as the word denotes, is the actual beholding of something. It is no longer reasoning or wondering, but is vision itself. One writer says that in Meditation we sit before the curtain pondering upon what we hope to see, and then suddenly when the curtain is raised, we contemplate what lies there behind.

In Meditation we consider the significance of some subject or object: in Contemplation we behold it. The former is more partitive: the latter more unitive. A subject may be pondered for any length of time, analysed and thoroughly investigated, but its solution or synthetic significance usually comes only when there is a momentary pause of the thinking principle; true contemplation ensuing with the cessation of meditation. It is in this manner that Great Truths are beheld.

The nature of mystical or religious contemplation can be defined as "a looking to God." In itself it is not meditative or reflective but simply a calm gaze upon something that the mind has previously accepted. In Meditation the illative and discursive faculties dwell upon statements, principles or ideas *about* God or about anything. But the object of mystical Contemplation is to gain Spiritual Perception; the Soul strives to see God, to feel His Presence, to touch and taste Him, so to speak. This, of course, is beyond the power of the mind

and senses, and it is only during the brief lull in their functioning that mystical Contemplation really begins.

There are other forms of contemplation besides that which is here called the mystical or spiritual, *e.g.* :—

Physical Contemplation—of material objects.
Phantasmal* Contemplation—of so-called psychical or astral objects.
Intellectual Contemplation—of mental images.

Active Meditation need not necessarily accompany any of these forms of Contemplation, hence it is possible to behold any kind of phenomena unpremeditatively. But it is well to emphasize the importance of following theory and science as well as art and practice. Prayerful-Meditation is a necessary preliminary to spiritual Contemplation. It produces calm, and by a withdrawal from contact with externals it leads to interior realization.

## § 6. THE ART AND PRACTICE.

I. The Call to Contemplation is not for all. Many are neither ready for it nor in a position to benefit by its practice. In any case it is not the only mode for gaining a consciousness of the Divine Presence, as subsequent articles may show.

According to some Mystics there are certain definite signs which indicate readiness for contemplative exercises as distinct from prayer and meditation :—

(1) An inability and disinclination to meditate for extended periods; an aridness of ideas, not necessarily caused by mental inertia, but sometimes because the mind acts so swiftly that it is not easy to dwell long on one idea.

(2) A desire for inward life, a turning from externals, longing for inner Solitude and Silence.

*Phantasy is a form of perception which has to do with phantoms or images of a certain kind. Fantasy is similar, but is here understood as having to do with the fanciful. Divine Creative Imagination is distinct from both. The majority of aimless thoughts are phantastical, while the impressions caused by fear are a good illustration of Fantasy.

(3) Reading and Studying become irksome, not because of laziness, but because they no longer provide the same interior satisfaction.

(4) A deepening realization of human impotence and inherent weakness, and the uselessness of merely finite efforts to find Truth, or God, or attain any true Goal.

(5) An interior yearning or love-longing of the Soul to commune with That which it *knows* is greater than itself.

II. The Qualifications for Contemplation are many. They mainly result from ardent prayer and confirmed meditation :—

(1) Love : the *sine qua non* of the contemplative mystic.

(2) Faith : the act of endeavouring to contemplate something not yet known or seen, implies the possession of a certain degree of faith in the actual existence of that which one seeks.

(3) Concentration : one-pointedness and single-heartedness. Love makes concentration easy, but without that love concentration is ever laborious and irksome.

(4) Tranquillity—of mind and body and emotions—the fruit of love.

The importance of attaining Tranquillity is often falsely exaggerated. Love and Faith are much more essential. Various yoga systems postulate processes for attaining tranquillity—more or less artificial—which, generally speaking, are unsuitable for Western temperaments. Unnatural force causes undesirable reaction and resistance, but love leads gently forward. Contemplation should be an act of love,—easy and natural—never a task.

Accessory to the above are (5) Patience, (6) Resignation, (7) Perseverance, and (8) Stability or Interior Equilibrium between the "pairs of opposites." These, also, although called Qualifications, are really of the nature of "fruits," or perfumes from the blooming of the Soul's flower.

III. The principal Hindrances to the practise of Contemplation are obviously the contraries of the qualifications, *e.g.*, (1) Indifference, (2) Doubt, (3) Waywardness, (4) Restlessness,

(5) Impatience, (6) Discontent, (7) Irresolution, and (8) Instability or lack of balance.

IV. The Act of Contemplation, as aforesaid, should be natural and easy: it does not depend merely upon rules as to how to obtain perfect concentration and abstraction but upon the impelling force of mystical love. It is not necessary to know exactly when Meditation passes into Contemplation. Usually it occurs unexpectedly. Expectation may even deter, whereas resignation invites.

Meditation is *continued reasoning* or mental activity: Contemplation is *continued attention*, wherein the mind may be at rest. In its highest and purest forms the Act of Contemplation rarely lasts longer than a few seconds, but in that brief flash the Soul may glimpse Eternity.

Here a reference to the nature of Concentration is perhaps necessary. The word in a mystical sense may be considered as meaning "an indrawing to a centre." Unfortunately the term is often understood as the endeavour to fix the mind or attention rigidly upon a given object as long as possible, implying thereby exertion and strain. In the absolute sense it is impossible to concentrate consciously and continuously upon one object for longer than a few seconds. If this act is successfully sustained then a state of absorption or abstraction immediately ensues which may, or may not, be desirable, according to its nature. It is desirable when it leads to inner Mystical Union, but undesirable when, by a species of self-hypnosis, the mind becomes passive and thus easily impressed by any kind of external influence. In the former state the mystic remains alert and joyful, but in the latter a drowsiness usually follows as well as a depression. But with the right attitude of mind and heart there is nothing to fear.

The ability to concentrate is best acquired as a natural growth by natural exercises. To set the mind deliberately to concentrate upon some one object to the exclusion of all else is more or less artificial, and when repeated instead of becoming easier more often becomes *increasingly difficult*. Frequently it dissipates more vital force than violent physical exercise, with less results. But to summon up all the energies of heart and mind and will in one's endeavour to feel and

know That Great One Who is our Source and Goal is perfectly natural, and when done as an Act of Love and Faith, makes concentration *increasingly easy*. Many methods advocated for cultivating concentrative faculties actually produce outward-going tendencies, whereas mystical concentration is an inward-going tendency, an indrawing to the Centre of one's being where the Inner Lord hears the knock of Love and opens the gates of Vision.

V. Broadly speaking there are two kinds of Contemplation: (1) the Acquired, and (2) the Infused. The first, which is a result of exercise and training, is the kind chiefly practised by the Sage or Philosopher, but even here love of wisdom prevails. The second, which has the appearance of a Gift or Act of Divine Grace, is the kind chiefly practised by the Saint or Religious Mystic, as well as by the Servant when practising the Presence of God. The Philosophic-Religious Mystic practises both kinds.

| Acquired Contemplation. | Infused Contemplation. |
|---|---|
| Arrived at step by step. | Occurs suddenly, unexpectedly. |
| Usually follows meditation. | Does not depend on meditation. |
| Depends mainly upon the mind. | Depends mainly upon the heart. |
| Pertains more to the Intellectual—the True. | Pertains more to the Devotional—the Good. |
| Generally concerns things previously in the mind. | More often concerns something new. |
| Rarely reaches the highest states, but when reached they are attained *consciously*. | Reaches the highest states more easily, but not usually so consciously. |

## § 7. THE EFFECTS.

Mystical Contemplation is an endeavour of the finite consciousness to apprehend the Infinite, therefore it is productive of infinite effects. These vary according to the degree of inner unfoldment of every individual contemplationist, but may be classified thus:—

I. Visions and Hallucinations.
II. Locutions and Voices.
III. Revelations and Illuminations.
IV. Ecstasies and Union.

The first two, however, are not the true effects of mystical contemplation, although they may be incidental.

I. Visions and Hallucinations.

All visions may be real, in the sense that they are actually seen, but unreal in the sense that they have no permanent subsistence. Many are quite illusory and the results of phantasy and fantastical imagination.

They may be kaleidoscopic or vague disconnected forms seen as in dreams, figurative or symbolical. Although they are effects frequently associated with Contemplation they are far from being its natural and necessary results. Rather they are incidental and even accidental. They should be avoided rather than sought. If they happen there are several methods for testing them, *e.g.*, if spiritual and good they are productive of good effects, *i.e.*, peace, joy, reverence—leaving no doubt behind about their origin. They are followed by an elevation of the mind and heart to God with feelings of gratitude and a strong disposition to prayer; they leave deep humility and a non-desire to speak about them; they are irresistible and are not susceptible to any alteration; they cannot be dispelled. On the other hand if they are not of good origin they leave ill-effects behind, cause pride, nervous troubles, and sometimes breakdowns, but they can always be dispelled, if evil, by prayer and by reverting to God. One should guard against becoming attached to them in any way and should not desire their recurrence. Union with the Highest is the real aim of spiritual contemplation.

II. Locutions, Voices and Mystic Sounds.

These are of various kinds, such as distinct sounds, near or seemingly distant, heard by the ears, or such as are apparently inaudible, and seem to resound interiorly. They may consist of words uttered by voices, or they may be the wordless sounds of what is called "the Voice of the Silence."

They likewise can be tested in many ways. If self-produced, *i.e.*, the sub-conscious products of phantasy they are in familiar words and pertain to subjects already in the mind. If received from other sources they continue even when the attention is withdrawn or diverted.

If they are the results or effects of one's own energies—conscious, unconscious or sub-conscious—they are self-

evident and mean exactly what they say; but if they are received from other sources—terrestrial or celestial—their meaning may not be evident at first, but may convey something deeper than the mere words themselves.

If spiritual they are in the form of soundless or voiceless inner convictions which are immediately translated mentally, leaving no doubt whatever as to their meaning and truth.

### III. Revelations and Illuminations.

These may come as visions or sounds and bring their own interpretation, but more generally they are independent of forms and sounds, because the divinely inspired Prophet or Enlightened One when receiving revelation or illumination, does so by becoming one with it (Cf. Plotinus). The Seer and the Seen are one.

There are, however, many species of quasi-revelations which are not revelations in the absolute sense.

The tests as to the genuineness of revelations are the same as for visions and locutions, added to which they should be conformable to Experience and Universality, and satisfy one's intuition or innate sense of Truth. Moreover, if they are true and good, they will be of value, and the recipient will be able to apply them. They will not be trifling nor appeal merely to the sensational, but give an interior urge to greater achievement.

### IV. Ecstasy and Union.

Under this heading trance and rapture can also conveniently be included.

(1) Trance. In a certain sense the pure contemplative state is a passive one inasmuch as the mental and other objective activities are brought to rest. But mystically they are only at rest in order that the Soul itself—as distinct from its faculties—may be active and thus consciously touch Reality.

In the highest states the finite is said to be absorbed by the Infinite. This is a transcendental condition, beyond words to describe, full of blissful reality. In this trance-like state St. Teresa says: "the contemplationist neither thinks nor

feels as a human being. The understanding is stunned and struck dumb with amazement. The heart knows neither why it loves, nor what. All the functions of the mind are suspended. Nothing is seen, heard or known."

Levitation often occurs in this state when the mystic is exalted in deepest contemplation.

There are several kinds of trances, some of which are self-induced, hypnotic, or a kind of swoon produced by emotions. The highest are those which, according to the Saints, are caused by the inebriation of Divine Love wherein the finite nature (the 'self') is completely overwhelmed and becomes oblivious of all externalities. The fetters of body are cast off, and, for a short time the Soul is untrammelled by flesh.

(2) Rapture, or Ekstasis proper, is a result of inspiration. It is a more conscious state than that of Trance, with which it has many similarities. There is the ecstasy of the saint or religious-mystic, rapt in inner worship; there is the ecstasy of the poet, the musician, and the artist-soul, divinely enthused in the subjects of contemplation; there is the wonderful sensing of the Infinite of the philosophical-mystic, who, in his quest for the Absolute, feels his consciousness expand until all sense of separateness, of Time and Space, vanishes.

(3) Union. This is the real and ultimate aim of all true religious and mystical contemplation. Ecstasy and Rapture are but transitory stages. In Union, the Soul, after finding its 'self,' surrenders itself to Spirit and becomes "at-one" with God and with the All on every plane of manifestation.

### Notes on "Contemplation" from Plotinus.

"When Contemplation raises itself from Nature to Soul and from thence to Spirit, the contemplations always become more familiar and united with the objects of contemplation . . . . they are now both one, not by a certain acquired familiarity . . . . but they become one through essence, because in the Spiritual World Spiritual Essence is the same with Spiritual intellection (or perception). For there it cannot be any longer said that *this* is one thing and *that* another. . . . . It is requisite therefore that in the Spiritual World both should be truly one, and this is no other than a living and conscious contemplation." (Ennead, iv. 8.)

"To see and to have seen that Vision is reason no longer. It is more than reason, before reason and after reason, as also is the vision which is seen. And perhaps we should not here speak of sight: for that which is seen—if we must needs speak of seer and seen as two and not one—is not discerned by the seer, nor perceived by him as a second thing . . . . Therefore this Vision is hard to tell of: for how can a man describe as other than himself that which, when he discovered it, seemed no other, but one with himself indeed." (Ennead, vi. 9, 10.)

"Often when by a Spiritual Energy I am roused from body and converted to the inner self, and being separated from externals, retire into the depths of my essence, I then contemplate an admirable Beauty, and am then vehemently confident that my true nature is of a more excellent condition than that of a life merely animal and terrene. For then especially I energize according to the best life and become the same with a nature truly divine: being established in this nature, I arrive at that transcendent energy by which I am elevated beyond every other intelligible and fix myself in this sublime Eminence as in a divinely ineffable Harbour of Repose." (Ennead, iv. 8, 1).

# "THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD"

## § 8. GOD.

THE great end sought in religious-mysticism is the realization of the Presence of God,—within and without,—the Presence of the Indwelling and the Transcendent God.

Although, for this, the simple faith of the child may be more essential than the learned acumen of the metaphysician, it is also true that love is dependent upon knowledge. We cannot consciously love something of which we have no knowledge.

> "Let all our business be to know God: the more we *know* Him, the more we desire to know Him, and, as knowledge is commonly the measure of love, the deeper and more extensive our knowledge shall be, the greater will be our love; and if our love of God be great, we shall love Him equally in grief and in joy."—(Bro. Lawrence in "The Practice of the Presence of God.")

In order to practice consciously the Presence of God it is requisite to formulate, at least tentatively, some conception of God's Nature, which may eventually lead us to know Him.

Hazy and confused notions, blank and obscure metaphysical abstractions are of little use as objects of aspiration or incentives to love.

The more clearly defined is the end upon which our energies are focussed, the more effective and vitalized will be the means employed.

It has been affirmed that a man's conception of God is indicative or reflective of his life and general character. The same, no doubt, is correspondingly true in regard to systems

of religion or religious thought. The loftier the conception of Deity and the more exalted and sublime the idealism, the higher and grander becomes the religious cultus. Conversely, the lower and more crude the conception, the more marked is the absence of any real idealism in the religion, and the tendency towards idolatry becomes greater.

God, in His Absolute Nature, is, of course, unknowable, for the simple reason that the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. But God, in His Relative Nature, is knowable. He is knowable *through* His manifestations.

The Infinite Himself is not the same as His manifestations, else He could not be their cause.

It is here that man's difficulties arise, viz., in distinguishing between God and God's Creation, in deciding between a Personalized or Humanized God and an Impersonal or Supra-personal Deific Principle.

It is here that religion introduces the idea of the Logos who, as an Image of God, is an intermediary Principle and provides an object upon which the human imagination can be focussed in worship and adoration.

It is here, too, that philosophy can be of assistance in affording a means for giving a more or less clear conception of the relationships between God, and that, which, so to speak, emanates from Him.

For instance, in Proclus's "Theology of Plato" can be found the following proposition which might provide a comprehensive basis for all religious and mystical practices.

"Everything caused abides in, proceeds from, and returns to its cause."

(1) All things abide in God, and God abides in all things, although not in any one thing alone. All things, therefore, in some manner, reveal God's presence.

(2) All things proceed from God, or emanate from Him, and yet continue to possess an essential, a vital and an intelligent relationship with Him, since they causally abide in Him and depend upon His essence, life and intelligence for existence.

(3) All things retain the tendency to return to God in Whom is their causal root as well as their super-plenitude and perfection.

It is easy to see from this why God is Immanent and yet Transcendent.

If He were Immanent only, then all things collectively would constitute God Himself, and He would be contained within and subject to His own creation.

If He were Transcendental only, He would remain exempt from and outside of His Creation, which might cease to depend upon Him and be left entirely to itself. Access to Him would be impossible save by bridging an unknown gulf, and man, thus forsaken by His Creator, would be lost unless some supernatural power intervened.

But God is everywhere, as the sages and mystics in every age have proclaimed. All things reflect His Goodness, Truth and Beauty.

"All things are full of the Gods!"—(Proclus and Aristoteles.)

"Whither shall I go from Thy Sight and whither shall I flee from Thy Presence?"

"If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there! If I make my bed in Hell, behold Thou art there."

"If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me."—(Ps. 139, 7-10.)

"God fills all. He contains and is not contained. He is everywhere and nowhere, and this state belongs only to Him. He is in no place: in fact, space and the position of bodies were created by Him. It cannot be said of the Creator and the creatures that the first is contained in any of the second. On the other hand, God is everywhere . . . . no part of the universe has been left solitary by Him."—(Philo of Judea.)

"The ONE is Omnipresent: and we are always present to It, except in so far as we abnegate ourselves from It.

"It, indeed, cannot make us Its aim and centre, but It is Itself our true aim and centre.

"Thus we are always gathered around It, though we do not always turn towards It. We may compare ourselves to a choir surrounding a Choregus but which sings out of tune so long as it directs its attention away from him to external things: but when it turns to him, it sings in perfect harmony, deriving its inspiration from him. So it is with us: we are always gathered around the centre of our being."—(Ennead, vi. 9, 8.)

"Let us therefore, contemplate this Divinity, Who is not present here and absent there, but Who is everywhere."—(vi. 5, 4.)

"The ONE is everywhere and also nowhere, because He fills everything and produces everything without being all that He produces."—(iii. 9, 4.)

"The ONE is all things but no one of all. The Principle of all things cannot itself be all things."—(v. 2, 1.)

"The ONE is self-sufficient, supremely independent of all things."—(v. 3, 17.)

"Thou Most High and most near: most secret and most present."—(Confessions of St. Augustine, Bk. VI.)

## § 9. THE REAL PRESENCE.

For accepting the belief that the Presence of God can be realized even Here below there is ample testimony in the utterances of the Great Ones in all ages.

No particular place, period, creed or religion can truly claim exclusiveness in this respect. Whatsoever is especially adapted to the Divine, through similitude, receives by sacred sympathy, a consciousness of the Divine Presence in some measure, however small. This may happen anywhere and at any time. But it is obvious that this Presence can be realized more easily under some circumstances than others. For this reason different religious systems have, or have had, their holy places, their consecrated symbols, their ceremonies and practices, around which a sacred atmosphere grows, causing even the irreligious who approach them to be impressed by an ineffable influence, in spite of themselves.

Who has not recognized that a place set aside for religious worship possesses an atmosphere peculiar to itself and quite distinct from places used merely for mundane purposes?

And this is not a special characteristic of modern houses of worship. Far from it, for evidences of ancient Holy Places can be found in every land. Consider, for example, the Great Pyramid of ancient Egypt with its innermost chambers of the King and Queen—Osiris and Isis; or the gorgeous temples of the East and West, majestic in their symbolic adornments; or the magic circles of the Druids who had also their rough-hewn temples open to air and sun; or the sacred Groves of the Greeks where dwelt their Oracles.

Many are the time-worn monuments, still standing as silent tokens of man's homage to the Great Unknown God.

Almost all religions have had their Holy of Holies; the

Shekinah or Tabernacle of God with mankind, with its Mercy Seat betwixt the Two Kerubim and Their Flaming Swords.

The religious ceremonies and mysteries are world ancient: the Egyptian, Phœnician, Phrygian, the Orphic, Eleusinian, Thesmorphorian, Pythagorean, Mithraic, etc.

The theurgic practices of different races have their parallels and analogies, *e.g.*, the Vedic Soma Cup; the Sacred Drink of the Gods in the Egyptian Mysteries; the Hoamo Cup of the Zoroastrians; the Juice of the Grape in the Bacchic Mysteries; the Elevation of the Host in the Christian Mysteries.

All these things have their own peculiar beauty and significance, and who can say that they are but superstitions, fetishes, evidences of idolatry or indications of primitive weaknesses?

Human Nature, in itself alone, now, as it ever was, is weak, impotent, and prone to fall. It needs all the supports and aids it can find and use for the attainment of its Great End,—viz., the right adjustment and ordination of the human to the Divine Nature, so to be receptive to Divine Inspiration, Grace, Wisdom and Love. Sooner or later man must recognize his utter dependence upon That Great One, Whose delights are with the Sons of Men. To realize His Presence is to transform this earthly house into a veritable tabernacle of God.

The Presence may be realized *within*, but it is usually evoked by something *without*, which for a special reason has caused God's nearness to be felt.

Inseparable from this awareness of God's Presence is the spirit of reverence, reverential awe, wonder, homage, adoration, devotion and love. By this spirit of veneration the whole exterior life naturally and spontaneously becomes an act of worship.

It is the spirit of piety in which the devotee approaches the Altar of the Lord, whether in a Temple made by hands or in the Great Temple of the Cosmos.

All things and all beings can speak of God,—the loveliness of Nature, the magnitude and majesty of the universe; the unfathomable mystery of even the humblest creatures in the world. But of all things, man himself often and when least aware of it, speaks most eloquently. For is not man's Ideal

Archetype fashioned in the Image of God? Thus when he approaches his Ideal in any of his acts, his presence becomes, unwittingly, a benediction to his fellow men. The more man forgets himself, surrendering everything to the divine ideal in perfect trust, the nearer and dearer he becomes to God and to all beings.

## § 10. THE PRACTICE.

"Thou wilt show me the Path of Life: *in Thy Presence is fulness of Joy*: at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."—Ps. 16, 11.)

The practice of the Presence of God may be defined as the constant fixing of the *attention* upon Him—or upon some Great Ideal symbolising Him—and the endeavour to see the Divine—or realize the Ideal—in all things and all things in the Divine.

It implies also the fixing of the *intention*—the making of a new motive for all our actions—that they be done all for love, to the Glory of God and the realization of the Great Integral Ideal.

Every act, every word, every thought, every sentiment can contribute in this way, provided the Attention and Intention are there to convert them into aspects of the Practice.

Here, perhaps, it is necessary to refer to an objection that may arise in many minds, viz., the impracticability of all this. For, it might be argued, how can one practise the Presence, and, at the same time, attend to one's livelihood, without running the risk of quickly becoming submerged in the incessant struggle for existence?

This objection arises largely from a total misunderstanding of what is and what is not practical in the real sense. It is also due to erroneous conceptions as to the nature of religious mysticism.

Surely, to seek God, in whom is our beginning and end, is the most practical occupation that can well be engaged in. And if this be granted, then we must seek Him in the world, in our fellow-beings, in our ordinary life as well as in the closed chamber. If there is no place for God in our work-a-day activities, surely they are not practical, *i.e.* judging practicability from its highest standard. But these very activities are *the* means—par excellence—for practising the

presence; for making ideas practical, for putting theory into practice. If this is not so, then theory, philosophy, religion, and the like are all useless and so much waste of time.

Experience shows, however, that the balanced mystic, with due prudence and discretion, becomes intensely practical and clear-seeing in all spheres of life.

In reality the practice of the presence is simplicity itself and is by no means something to reserve for seclusion and solitude.

"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God."—(Paul of Tarsus, I. Cor., x. 31.)

"Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou givest, whatsoever thou doest of austerity, do thou that as an offering unto ME."—(Bhagavad Gîtâ, ix. 26.)

By this consecration, all things become holy, spiritualized, and imbued with the Divine Presence.

"We should apply ourselves unceasingly to this one end, to so rule all our actions that they be little acts of communion with God: but they must not be studied, they must come naturally, from the purity and simplicity of the heart.—(Spiritual Maxims of Bro. Lawrence.)

"By often repeating these acts, they become habitual, and the Presence of God is rendered, as it were, natural to us."—("Practice of Presence," Bro. Lawrence.)

". . . . I make it my only business to persevere in His Holy Presence, wherein I keep myself by a *simple attention*."—(Ibid.)

". . . . A little lifting-up of the heart suffices: a little remembrance of God."—(Ibid.)

". . . . It is the Schooling of the Soul to find its Joy in His Divine Companionship."—(Spiritual Maxims.)

"The Practice of the Presence of God is the shortest and easiest way to attain."—(Practice of Presence.)

The practice of the Presence is the returning or converting of the Soul to God. For although all possess God—since He is the Ever-abiding One—yet all are not conscious of His Presence.

The way of this Return is triple:—

(1) To the GOOD, through the Principle of BEING—by converting the action and intention of the will to God.

(2) To the BEAUTIFUL through the Principle of LIFE—by filling the heart with Love and Devotion.

(3) To the TRUE through the Principle of INTELLECT —by lifting up the mind to seek the knowledge of God.

The Practice itself is also threefold. There is the abiding in the God Within, in perfect calmness and serenity, unshakeable because He is the deep Centre of our Being. There is the proceeding forth into the God in the centre of all beings in self-forgetting love and service. And there is the ascent to the God Transcendent, because He is the Height above Height, the Beauty beyond Beauty, the Supreme Perfection, the Everlasting Joy.

He is the Good to be possessed by obedience to the Immutable Archetypal Law.

He is the Truth to be perceived in the purified Mirror of the Soul.

He is the Beauty to be beheld within the Beauties of Manifestation.

He is the Unity without Whom all is void.

# "WORSHIP"

## § 11. NATURE AND OBJECTS.

WHEN man has seen something of that grandeur and ineffable beauty which characterizes all the works of God, he is moved, first, to admire and respect, then, to revere and adore.

This is the beginning of true worship.

As he contemplates with increasing wonder the marvellous plenitude of the universe, he is impelled at last to bow in adoration, and even supplication, before the Supreme Cause of All.

Worship springs from veneration and reverence, which, in turn come from wonder and awe. It is innate in all, however much concealed. It brings to the Soul its purest joys.

As an inherent impulse, worship is perfectly natural. When released, this impulse gives wings to the Soul's holy desires, but when restrained and denied, the Soul cannot soar to its real liberty and glory.

Veneration and reverence lead also to praise, devotion and love, while from love comes the desire for union with the object of one's love and the aspiration to imitate it and to be assumed into its likeness. This aspiration is the very essence of worship.

Even as real prayer, meditation and contemplation are dependent upon certain factors, so likewise worship is true or false according to certain qualifications.

Three considerations are necessary in order to determine the dignity of the worship :—

(1) The nature of the object worshipped.
(2) The degree of veneration paid to it.
(3) The motive for worshipping.

The first is qualified by the intellectual conceptions of the

worshipper, the second, by his devotional attitude, and the third by the purity or impurity of his intention.

Man should pay due respect, and sometimes homage, to all beings who excel him in all or any of their attributes. But, as was emphasized by the venerable Master Pythagoras, he should worship in the first place that which is Divine, paying fullest possible homage to the Supreme Source of Gods and Men, Who should be worshipped, " with a profound, reverential and contemplative silence, and with the whole force of the Soul."

The degree of worship paid to natures secondary to the Primal One, should be in proportion to their respective dignity and transcendancy, but all natures superior to man are worthy of his reverence.

So likewise all sacred places, objects or symbols, consecrated to God, should be used with meet recognition of their significance and purpose, so that they may be neither desecrated nor used idolatrously.

By a remembrance of the principal tendencies contributing to false worship one can readily avoid both idolatry and formalism, whilst still making full use of externals.

An idol is an image, hence idolatry is the worship of the form instead of the idea which the form symbolizes.

False worship is due to erroneous conceptions, inordinate desires, and selfish or impure motives.

Through these, man worships, consciously or unconsciously, many inferior objects, evincing thereby his dependence upon them instead of upon God.

Thus, by paying too great attention to the body, to food, to money, and to many other mundane things,—useful and good in their right place—he unwittingly worships them. And these forms of idolatry are usually more harmful than what is termed " formalism."

Again, when he places undue importance and reliance upon signs and omens, or upon anything other than the Divine, he makes idols of these things. For they are all forms, the true significance of which is to be found only in the contemplation of That Great One whose Love, Wisdom and Power have permitted them to be brought forth into manifestation.

## § 12. ACTS OF WORSHIP.

### I. Without Externalities.

True prayer, meditation and contemplation are acts of worship which, truly speaking, need no externalities. They lead to that silent inner worship where words, and even thoughts, fail to express the aspirations of the Soul, and we remain mute in the Presence of the Almighty.

### II. With Externalities.

All acts of our external nature that are dedicated or consecrated to the Divine are species of worship in which externalities must play their part. They are sacramental.

It is difficult to make a clear distinction between the worship that uses externals and that which does not.

The uses of externals are many. They provide :—

(1) Focussing points for the devotional acts.
(2) Reminders to the mind when prone to wander.
(3) Means for unifying, sympathizing and harmonizing the outer with the inner.

They are not only sign-posts pointing heavenwards and away from earth, but also stepping-stones by which to ascend.

### III. Combined.

Worship in Spirit and in Truth combines the inner and the outer.

In true worship the whole nature is prostrated before the Divine, dedicated unreservedly to God, asking naught in return. The inner nature worships in spirit, but the truth of this interior act must be expressed even to the outermost. Thus by this self-oblation and self-emptying, the human nature becomes responsive and receptive to the Divine.

Symbolism, Sacred Music and Sacramental Acts enter largely into that worship which endeavours to combine the exterior with the interior oblation.

In the initial stages of worship, at least, it is requisite that there be something concrete upon which to focus the attention.

Symbols and Images may thus be highly salutary as means to an end. For instance, the O.A.W. symbol, of the encircled triangle, brings us to the true and holy ground of

ourselves, sealing us with the seal of the Trinity, fixing us in the very hyparxis of our substance and nature, and encircling us in the presence of the Supreme. When once established on Holy Ground we pass to the silent worship of the Transcendent and Ineffable One.

Sacred Music is also a very potent vehicle of worship. Indeed, according to Plato, Music may cause the Soul to be divinely inspired, to converse and commune with God. In the enthusiasm of elevative music, the Soul can express its praise, its gratitude, its devotion, its adoration, its love. In music of the right kind, the vehicles of the Soul become kindled to the harmonious vibration of divine ascension.

Sacramental Acts may be made magical oblations. When the exterior consecration of the sacramental elements is accompanied by a spiritual immolation, the being becomes interiorly reduced into the natural simplicity of its nature. Thus is the human nature softened and refined; its very being resolved into a sure and living offering—almost a libation—to the Divine.

By such means as these we "mount from the foundations of the deep, passing kingdom after kingdom"—until we come into the very adytum of our being.

> "May we truly respond to Thee, O Unnameable One, Unthinkable One, Ineffable One, beyond the Veil of the First-Born Light; may we in the deep silence of the Soul, contemplate and adore Thee."

# A MANUAL ON THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

(Jnana Marga)

# JNANA MARGA

## MANUAL NO. 3

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# The Path of Knowledge

## PROEMIAL

THE Path of Knowledge in the Light of Inward Illumination has for its goal the Realization of the Absolute Truth.

Philosophy provides the foundation, the very pathway itself, upon which the Aspirant must establish himself. It is the High Ground from which he may the more clearly perceive, recognize, distinguish, unify and correlate aspects of Truth.

Symbology unfolds on all sides a perpetual panorama, the inner significance of which is more and more revealed to the Aspirant in the light of Philosophy. He glimpses Beauty as well as Truth, Harmony as well as Unity.

Mythology awakens his Intuitive Faculties, bringing them also into the quest for the True; calling him to the unsuspected heights and the wondrous profundities of the Divine Mysteries.

And lastly, Hermetic Science and Art lead the Aspirant to the portals of Mystical Participation through which the Below is to be transmuted into the Above.

# I.—"HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY"

THE human mind naturally reasons about Truth. In its unremitting operations, wittingly or unwittingly, it is always seeking Truth.

To find Truth is to see Truth, therefore, in proportion as the mind is able to recognize and distinguish what is true from what is false, so it may be said to find Truth, or at least an aspect of Truth.

All things express or represent, in some manner, aspects of Truth. In fact, in this sense, Truth itself is the very Reason of their existence—objectively and subjectively.

Hence, since the Mind cannot conceive of anything that has no existence, it follows that whatever the human mind reasons about, is, in this same sense, an aspect of truth, however far removed from the final and absolute Truth.

But the full significance of any aspect of truth is to be understood only when seen in its correct perspective and proper relationship with all other aspects.

Therefore, a living consciousness of Truth is dependent upon the integrity and comprehensiveness of the human reason.

In like manner, universal and integral aspects of truth are more easily recognized and accepted than particularized and partial expressions.

But, in every case, the clearness of perception is modified by the pre-conceptions or prejudices already in the mind, and, likewise, by the objects or motives for which Truth is sought.

For instance, the object may be to collect and classify countless expressions of finite truth in order to formulate generalized laws for practical ends—personal or impersonal.

Such conceptions are scientific, in the common acceptance of the term.

On the other hand, the object may be for the sake of Truth itself, in order to attain, through It, a consciousness of the ultimate Reality.

Such conceptions are philosophical—in the original and best application of the term.

Philosophy, in contradistinction to Science, deals with the essential, universal and abstract nature of things, more than with their apparent, particularized and concrete characteristics.

Philosophy, as its name signifies, is wisdom rather than knowledge, and is more unitive and synthetic, while Science is more partitive and analytical.

Moreover, among Systems of Philosophy, those that are the most universal in world-view and most adequate in expression, are also the most self-evident and harmonious, both in themselves and in their relationships with other systems.

The Hermetic* System of Philosophy may be defined as the Wisdom concerning God, the Universe and Man.

As the Wisdom concerning God it presents a most exalted conception of Deity and is characterized by a tone of profoundest sanctity.

As the Wisdom concerning the Universe, or Macrocosm, it brings the Sensible World into the light of the Intelligible Sphere, and reveals the underlying unity substanding all duality.

As the Wisdom concerning Man, or the Microcosm, it is characterized at once by the principle of unity and universality, extensively unfolding all his principles, powers, vehicles and relationships, and intensively indicating his assimilation to the type and pattern of Perfect Man.

The principal Hermetic conceptions under these three headings are conveniently summarized thus:—

I.—God.

(1) The Divine Unity.
(2) The Divine Trinity.
(3) The Divine Plurality.

II.—The Macrocosm.

(1) The Intelligible Universe—Above.
(2) The Sensible Universe—Below.

* The Hermetic Wisdom derives its name from the first Master Hermes-Trismegistus of Ancient Egypt, but its philosophic tenets are perhaps best preserved and expressed by the original Platonic and Neoplatonic Philosophers and their genuine successors.

III.—The Microcosm.
(1) Archetypal Man.
(2) Threefold Man.
(3) Pan-Humanity.

Many of these aspects are so self-evident that they hardly need expression, but by considering them in their hierarchical order, they not only become more luminous but also shed additional light upon other less obvious conceptions.

I.—God.

(1) *The Divine Unity.*

What could be more simple and yet, at the same time, more profound in ultimate implication than that Name for the Supreme which seems to ring reverberatingly through all the works of the Platonists and Neoplatonists?

They spoke of Him Whom they knew to be wholly ineffable as "THE ONE," sometimes, however, supplementing that Name by another, as if to confer a title which in some measure might be faintly applicable—"THE ONE AND THE GOOD."

For not only is HE, Who is so denominated, the *ONE* prior to all, and *THE* ONE superior to all, but HE is also *THE ONE* within Whom all things have their Being and without Whom nothing could possibly be.

But besides being in such an exempt transcendental sense THE INEFFABLE ONE, He is also denominated "THE GOOD," because the whole of existence thirsts to partake of His Perfect Plenitude and Infinite Goodness.

Simple, Reverent, and Ineffably Occult is this beautiful appellation of the Most High, Who must always remain transcendentally beyond the highest conception of the highest philosophy.

(2) *The Divine Trinity.*

Although GOD is essentially ONE and the Unity of all Unities, yet He cannot be conceived without immediately introducing the Idea of a Trinity.

Philosophically, this Root Trinity is conceivable as:—

The Divine Essence, abiding immanent in all, the cause of all being;

The Divine Life, proceeding providentially through all, the cause of all activity;

The Divine Mind, transcendentally converting all things to Itself, the cause of all intelligence.

The Divine Essence is the Logos of Being, Light, and Love—the All-Father.

The Divine Life is the Logos of Life and Providence—the All-Mother.

The Divine Mind is the Logos of Power, the Creator Lord, and Great Architect.

This triadic conception beautifully unfolds the inconceivable Unity of the Supreme, revealing the Three Hypostatic Principles upon which the whole of manifestation fundamentally depends, and providing the human intelligence with a key to the understanding of the true nature of all things.

It has its analogies everywhere, in all realms—inner and outer—in the great and in the small, in science, religion, mysticism and in every field of activity.

(3) *The Divine Plurality.*

The Three become the Many, and the Many are held subjectively within the Three; for, from and by and through each of the Three Logoi, a multitude of Divine Powers, Principles and Perfections proceed.

In the Platonic terminology these Divine Processions are celebrated under the appropriate title of "The Immortal High Gods"; Immortal because They are stable and eternal in essence and energy; and Gods, because They are the immediate Progeny of the One Only Supreme God.

The primal emanations of Deity must necessarily be most like unto It, therefore are They truly Divine and Their proper appellation is "The Gods."*

Symbolically They are to God what the rays are to the Sun. For They are in no sense to be confounded with those exalted beings who are said to be the products of ages of evolution, but They are indeed Eternal Irradiations of the Supreme ONE.

Although They are a multitude of self-perfect Unities, They do not constitute a plurality of God-heads, but rather by magnifying the mystery of the One Godhead, They raise

* In other systems they receive other names.

our conceptions of the Absolute to the most exalted point possible.

To deny the existence of the High Gods is to deny the existence of the universe, for They are those Powers, Principles and Perfections which substand the Universe.

And to doubt the Power of the Supreme to produce the Gods is to doubt His Omnipotence and to place a limit to His Unfathomable Prolificness.

Without His Plurality and Divine Irradiations, the Supreme would be like a rayless sun.

But the Gods, Who *are* God in His manifestations, bring Him near to man, for They all perpetually proceed from and return to Him as Unities from and to One Primal Monad.

They distribute, regulate and make manifest the Divine Essence and Life, and, as God's Eternal Ministers, are the support, guidance and upliftment of all that is, was or ever will be.

II. The Macrocosm.

In philosophy it is customary to consider the universe as composed of a number of different planes of existence, consciousness and action. These are said to inter-penetrate each other and are difficult to conceive of from a purely finite standpoint.

But, more obviously, the Macrocosm is twofold, when considered apart from the Divine.

For example, its dual aspects are known as:—

the Above and the Below;
the Eternal and the Transient;
the Subjective and the Objective;
the Spiritual and the Corporeal;
the Intelligible and the Sensible.

The lower is symbolical of the higher; the outer is an expression of the inner; the objective is a projection of the subjective.

Each, in turn, has various sub-divisions or sub-planes, but an intimate parallelism may be traced throughout, and for this reason their relative characteristics may be hypothetically postulated by means of the Hermetic Law of Correspondences, and, by taking them as a basis, a more or less complete cosmological scheme may be outlined.

The Spiritual Universe is the Field of Divine Operations

and is characterized by Intelligible Essence and Eternal Life, of which the Sensible Universe is the outer, lower and transient expression.

It subjectively comprehends the archetypes or Ideas of all things that have been or ever will be expressed.

These Ideas are unitary, fontal and productive; preserving, elevating and perfecting. Hence, the Spiritual Universe is not only potentially but likewise actually perfect. It is the Kingdom where all Ideals are realized.

The Sensible Universe embraces the objective life and corporeal existences by which the archetypes of the Intelligible Universe are made manifest under the limited conditions of time and space. It includes all kingdoms of nature.

III.—The Microcosm.

(1) *Archetypal Man.*

According to the Hermetic Philosophy Man is called the Microcosm of the Macrocosm.

The Macrocosm below analogically expresses the Spiritual Macrocosm above. In a corresponding manner, the human Microcosm below is an expression of the Spiritual Archetype Above.

The Archetype is essentially Monadic, Perfect and Eternal. From It all Microcosms may be said to proceed, and, inasmuch as they are potentially one with It, they inherit the right to participate and manifest Its attributes in varying degrees of glory.

The Archetypal Microcosm stands in the same relation to the Spiritual Sphere as Humanity holds in regard to the Sensible Universe, for the Supreme Microcosm, as the Universal Christos, is not only the Head of Humanity, but also the Lord of the Universe.

(2) *Threefold Man.*

The One, the Three and the Many are repeated in the Microcosm, Man.

The Mystery of the Trinity is reflected in each of the three root principles of Spirit, Soul and Body.

Of these, the first and the last, with their several aspects, correspond to the dual Macrocosm, while the Soul stands, metaphorically, between, with a twofold vision, power and purpose.

Above the Soul is the Spirit, the Ideal Principle, in and

by and through which the Soul participates in the Divine Unity, Trinity and Plurality, and without which it can never enter consciously the Kingdom of spiritual realities and perfections.

Below the Soul, the "Body"* Principle is suspended, in and by and through which the Soul expresses itself and without which it could not enter into conscious relationship with the Sensible Universe.

When united to Spirit the Soul is assumed into Its likeness, and when identified with Body it becomes subject to the laws of the Sensible World.

The Soul, infinitely receptive, is destined to hold, on the one hand, the infinite plenitude of Spirit, and on the other, to manifest that plenitude through the principles of Order, Harmony and Beauty.

(3) *Pan-Humanity.*

Pan-Humanity is essentially one, just as the Immortal High Gods are essentially one.

Its apparent multiplicity is due to the numerous attributes possessed and manifested by each Microcosm in multifarious ways. For example:—

> The Intellectual Activity, with its objective and subjective expressions; the Affectional or Vital Principle, with its lower and higher activities; the Volitional Faculty, with its free and determined aspects.

The action, inter-action, and re-action of these attributes, with their numberless phases in individual and collective Microcosms, result in the infinite diversity by which Pan-Humanity is characterized.

The destiny of each Microcosm is to manifest harmoniously all its attributes to the utmost on all planes of consciousness. This is partially to be achieved by various processes but finally it depends for its consummation upon conscious identification with the One Perfect Spiritual Archetype, Who, while transcending all multiplicity and diversity, is Himself the unification and co-ordination of all.

Through Him, Pan-Humanity, following the Divine Plan, is converted from its manyness to its basic triune nature, and from that to its Unity or One-ness with the Supreme.

* The Body Principle here includes all that manifests—all vehicles—not merely the physical body alone.

# II.—"HERMETIC SYMBOLOGY"

## § 1. THE PRINCIPLE.

THE principle of Hermetic Symbology, and indeed of all symbology, is the hypothesis that the manifested expresses, in some manner, the unmanifested.

The Divine Manifestor is the Great Symbolist. It is He "who expresses in the panorama of the universe the Supernal Wisdom" of the Inconceivable Supreme. It is He who unfolds ideation into substantiality, and potentiality into actuality, and it is He indeed who causes the manifested to spring into being from the unmanifested.

This principle underlies the Laws of Expression, Correspondence and Affinity, whereby the Thoughts of God are so written in the world of form that "whoso desires to read, may read."

The world of form is a vast symbolic code in which is concealed God's Idea of all things—of the Cosmos, of Nature, and of Man himself. The outer objects have their inner significance, even as that which is below is in some way a reflected type of that which is above.

Man, as a symbol, is God's masterpiece, for, hidden within him is to be found the key to every mystery. He is not a fleeting chimera of a few years, for, beyond, behind and above his transient nature is an eternal ideal archetype which it is his sublime destiny to realize. Extrinsically man is human; intrinsically he is divine.

The intrinsic value of a symbol is determined by the dignity of the idea represented, the degree to which that idea may be realized and the adequacy of its expression. The extrinsic value of a symbol is proportionate to the depth and dignity of the mind that uses it. To one mind a symbol might be meaningless but to another fraught with unutterable secrets.

A true symbol is a living emblem of Truth. It speaks to all who hear and understand. Nature is a gigantic system of symbolism and its voice is a living and intelligent voice.

The lore of Nature is the Book of God, which grows more and more legible in the light of the Hermetic Law of Correspondence.

The symbol Man, is set in the midst of a stupendous and mysterious mosaic of symbols with which he has countless hidden but intimate affinities. The more he realizes this the nearer he comes to a knowledge of himself.

Metaphysics alone mean little to the mind until amplified symbolically either by metaphors, allegories, personifications or other means.

The memory and recognition of phenomenal and concrete objects depend upon the faculty of symbolizing them mentally. The objects themselves cannot, concretely, enter our minds, but by substituting appropriate symbols or impressions for the objects contemplated we give them a place within the horizon of our consciousness. In this way our store of knowledge is said to increase, for by reproducing the idea of a thing we make it our own.

Conscious thought is impossible without symbols and when so employed symbols constitute a species of language whereby thoughts are rendered expressible. This language may verge towards abstractions or it may be quite concrete, according to the penetrative depth and power of the mind using it.

All language, necessarily, is composed of symbolic ideas, images, or characters, hence the study of symbology becomes, in reality, the study of those counters of thought used by man throughout the ages.

## § 2. THE CLASSIFICATION.

I. Symbols may be classified in many ways. For example, there are symbols corresponding to all the activities and accomplishments of man, falling naturally under those titles with which we are so familiar—Science, Art, Philosophy, Religion, Mysticism, Occultism, Mathesis, Technology, Music, Commerce, Sociology, etc.

II. A more comprehensive classification is the following:

(1) Universal Symbols.

(2) Arbitrary Symbols.

Universal Symbols are more or less self-evident and immutable in basic significance.

Arbitrary Symbols are subject to modification and mutability according to the manner of their use.

Numerical Symbology is a good instance of the class that is universal, such as the number three, or the triangle, which reveals the root triplicity of all phases of existence and the triadic nature of all things.

Arbitrary Symbols are extremely diverse in nature and significance, for example the greetings used in conventionality or the chosen emblems in the symbology of the artistic. But even Arbitrary Symbols are connected with universal ones, however apparently remote the relationship may be.

III. The quaternary classification of symbols is an excellent one.

(1) Formal Symbols.

(2) Sound Symbology.

(3) Symbols of Colours, Odours, Tastes.

(4) Symbols of Motion.

Each of these is twofold—Natural and Human.

Natural Symbols are those we perceive in Nature; they make up the stupendous mysterious Symbology of the Great Architect.

Human Symbols are those made by man in all his works. The World of Art makes up Human Symbology, just as the World of Nature figures the Symbolism of God.

The Sun is a splendid example of a Formal Symbol, revealing the vast centre of our System from which flows ceaselessly the Light, Heat and Force that sustains our Universe. Figures, numbers, letters, whether graphical, geometrical or hieroglyphical belong to formal symbology. The astronomical symbols comprise the alphabet of the stars and are profoundly significant.

Of Sound Symbols there are:—the voices of Nature and of man; the music of the spheres; the sounds of the Great Mother and of all Her children.

Spoken words or names are symbols of ideas. Man is an incarnation of a word—a name.

The language used and the sound of the voice is an index of the dispositions of the speaker. All languages are symbolical. Some are elegant, some dignified, some mystical, some mantric.

Words are vehicles of thoughts and symbols of feeling. There are words of love, words of wisdom, words of power, words of fire; winged words, sacramental words, and traditional words pregnant with power and mystery.

As examples of Colour Symbols there are the prismatic colours and their correlation in the septenary scheme; and the pigments used in art.

The odoriferous and gustatory properties also have symbolical correspondences.

The cosmic movements and periodic revolutions of the orbs in space, the flowing of a river, the flight of a bird, the attitudes and gestures of man are instances of Symbols of Motion.

## § 3. THE APPLICATION.

I. Some indication of the extent to which symbols are to be applied is opened out by considering the symbolical significance of the ten Aristotelian categories which can be predicated of all things.

(1) *Substance.* Substantial symbols provide the basis or groundwork of manifestation. In Neoplatonism there are spiritual as well as material "substances."

(2) *Quality.* The qualifications or attributes of all things are appreciable only through the medium of symbols. The qualities themselves inhere in things, whether recognised or not, but they are the more exactly estimated the nearer the symbols employed approximate to those qualities. For example, gold is an appropriate symbol of purity because it is the purest metal.

(3) *Quantity.* Mathematical theorems, as well as quantitative measurements, depend essentially upon suitable symbols. (Euclid was a great Symbolist as well as a Platonist.) Numerical Symbology is perhaps the most profound and scientific of all.

(4) *Relation.* Self-consciousness implies, and is indigent of, the clear perception of relations between the knower and the thing known. In its expansion, this consciousness enters

into wider and also closer symbolical relationships with all beings, and, at last, with the Infinite Itself.

(5) *Place.* That which is placed Here symbolizes that which is placed "Yonder." All localities or planes have their analogical symbology. Heaven and Hell as places are symbolical.

(6) *Time.* The past and the future exist only as simple or compound symbols in consciousness,—human or cosmic. The present symbolizes the Everlasting Now. All chronological orders, sequences, and successions are symbolical.

(7) *Condition.* Symbols are applied to denote dispositions, the permanence or impermanence of qualities, the changes of properties—chemical, alchemical, or otherwise.

(8) *Situation.* The hierarchical order indicates symbolically where everything is situated.

(9) *Activity.* The symbolics of forces, functions, energies, etc.

(10) *Passivity.* All things are both positive and negative, symbolically and actually. They are positive to those less active, but negative or passive to those more active. The Sun is a passive symbol to God but a positive symbol to the planets.

II. In the Interpretation of any symbol there are at least three stages, leading from the outer and finite meaning to the inner and infinite significance.

(1) *Concrete Significance.* The consideration and predication of the extrinsic, explicit, particular and obvious properties, *e.g.*, the Sun, its subsistence, quality, activity, etc.

(2) *Transitional Stage.* The extension of the concrete significance by inference, deduction or induction; treating the symbol as a theorem to be explained by a chain of reasoning leading to axioms, *e.g.*, the characteristics of the Sun, the significance of its shape and position, its triple activity or manifestation, its numberless rays, its prior and causal relationships with the lesser orbs of its system, etc.

(3) *Abstract Significance.* The intrinsic, implicit, and more inner meaning, revealing the innate, essential and universal idea, when by analogy, correspondence, affinity and association, we penetrate beyond the visible and apparent; *e.g.*, the Sun, its spiritual significance as an emblem of Deity,

having its three primal characteristics, its numberless irradiations, its prior causality, etc.

The above method utilizes the concrete to interpret the abstract, the phenomenal to express the noumenal, the sensible to unfold the intelligible, the relative to sense the absolute, the outward to open the inward. It must be recognized that in itself alone this method is incomplete. For the finite does not represent the infinite, nor need a labyrinth of particulars necessarily lead to a universal truth. Nevertheless, since that which is below bears witness to that which is above, it may take us a few rungs up the ladder of Truth.

III. Example. As an illustrative application the front cover of our Quarterly is suggestive,—for instance :—

The Circle is symbolical of the Supreme Source and Goal of all, beginningless and endless.

The Triangle within the Circle denotes the three primal manifestations of the One Supreme.

The Two Ankhs and Columns suggest, among other things, the two streams of Life—the proceeding and the returning.

The Gammadion at the base of each column suggests the four-fold whirlings of the streams of life upon the Cross of Manifestation.

A true symbol has many applications however. It is a key that can be turned again and again. It may be 3-fold, 7-fold, 10-fold or even 12-fold. Its significance on one plane may reveal its meaning on another.

By the application of symbols, thoughts may be co-ordinated, ideas may be unified, vague conceptions may be clarified. Symbolism is concentrated ideation. The vividness of a thought depends upon the ability to create a true and clear symbol of it, separated from all extraneous elements.

Symbols portray ideas and ideals too deep and sublime for mere words; they evoke exalted and inexpressible thoughts and feelings. What wondrous varieties and combinations of forms and figures and colours can be adapted to express that which the human voice could never utter. What ineffable emotions, infinite reminiscences and majestic ideals can, by the use of symbols, be called forth from the unmanifest into manifestation.

# III.—"HERMETIC MYTHOLOGY"

## § I. PURPOSE.

THERE are three main modes by which great teachers have presented Truth to mankind,—Dogmatically, Scientificaliy and Mystically.

These methods are, more or less, interdependent, but nevertheless, there are occasions when, for special reasons, one may be predominant.

To affirm that the Kingdom of Heaven is within, is a dogmatic truth.

To explain the affirmation—if this be possible—by philosophy or other means, and then present it in terms of these, is to change it into a scientific truth.

But if the statement, although positively asserted, is considered to have more than a literal significance and is to be understood symbolically or metaphorically, then it is a mystical truth.

Absolute Truth is, of course, infinite and therefore never to be fathomed by finite means.

Faith may accept Its dogmas. Reason may perceive Its science. Intuition may receive Its mystery.

But Absolute Truth Itself remains,—ineffable, although the whole universe is fashioned to unfold It.

The acceptance or perception of truth avail nothing unless productive of effect.

A dogmatic truth may be acted upon because of its moral influence on the will.

A scientific truth may be made practical because of its rational influence upon the mind.

But, as an impelling power, a mystical truth, when intuitively perceived, is more potent and productive than either of these, because it sheds its own intrinsic, irresistible beauty on the Soul and lifts up all things to higher and more effective levels.

Myths and Allegories are, in this respect, important means

for presenting mystical aspects of truth. They are tales of wonder and beauty, containing "images of what the Soul longs for and thirsts for." Their "beauty is the most unforgetable thing in the world" (Fiona McLeod).

And, because of the Immortal Ideals they contain, these legends of the "old ancient days" still retain their hold upon all lovers of beauty.

They have fulfilled, and continue to fulfil, at least a threefold purpose—viz., to veil, to preserve and to reveal mystical aspects of truth as presented in sacred legends and traditions.

Hermetic Mythology is that which pertains particularly to the Hermetic Tradition, which, emanating originally from Egypt flowed from thence through Chaldea to Greece. Therefore it embraces the pre-eminent mythological systems of the Egyptian and Grecian mysteries.

A myth is a veil that may be lifted, little by little, as its allegorical and inner significance is perceived.

Because the meaning of a myth is not self-evident, there is sometimes a tendency to regard it as an enigma purposely devised to hide truth. But this, although to some extent incidental, is not the primal purpose. Truth is not self-evident save when suitably presented to faculties that are capable of perceiving it. When the true vision is attained, Truth is perceived however much it may be veiled. Therefore, although myths veil truth, they do not exactly conceal it but rather are they the means of gradually preparing the eyes of the Soul to behold that which would blind by excess of light, if seen without meet preparation.

The mythological systems of antiquity constitute an immense repository of truth, which is the common heritage of humanity.

Considered collectively, they form a universal tradition in which the inspired utterances of the Great Ones are preserved. For almost without exception the mythical or fabulous element enters into every philosophic and religious system. Invariably, too, the basic principles of a tradition are embodied in the myths belonging to it.

Therefore, even if such a tradition should ever become corrupt, the characteristic preservative power of its myths will enable it to be periodically purified and revived.

Furthermore, they are more readily handed down through the generations or translated from one language into another than are philosophical or metaphysical treatises.

It is difficult to transmit the full significance of a philosophical principle in its original purity, but the story of a myth is easily conveyed even by those who do not understand it, and its significance is retained.

As the accumulated myths, fables, legends, allegories, and sacred traditions are more and more widely disseminated in many languages, so they grow more and more in universality and thus provide criteria of Truth of increasing value. They have an inherent vitality and perennial freshness although their beginnings may be lost in the remote past.

It is not without reason that myths have been called the truest things ever written, for they can reveal deep truths that would, in all probability, remain hidden if presented through other media.

Moreover, the truth in them is to be *seen* rather than to be reasoned about or accepted blindly.

The Hermetic Myths tell of the Irradiations of the One Supreme, *i.e.*, the Eternal High Gods; of the Incarnation of the Logos or Christos-Osiris Principle; of the descent of the Soul into manifestation and of its final redemption and perfection. They repeat in varied forms, the divine macrocosmic and microcosmic history—fabulous and yet true.

Interwoven with these magical mystery tales are ideas of almost fathomless significance. And the view-points from which they may be approached are without limit. Their influence is all-comprehensive.

Religion draws upon them for the personifying of its divine principles, through which, in worship, concrete and finite conceptions may lead to the abstract and infinite.

Philosophy adopts mythical terminology as soon as it leaves the concrete and practical and enters the realms of the Ideal. Plato, the Master Idealist, continually alludes to the Orphic and Homeric fables. His own allegories, too, are masterly examples of the mythic art.

Art, in turn, could not well dispense with mythology. Poets, painters, sculptors and musicians—all have recourse to mythology as the fount of their inspiration.

The day for myths and allegories is by no means past. Long will they serve useful purposes while mankind continue to speak in figures and metaphors. Indeed, bereft of these products of imagination, language would be shorn of those elements that give to it, not only its strength and beauty, but also much of its power of appeal to the intuition and that innate sense of truth and taste for beauty.

A true myth is a narrative, complete in itself, as a story, but having a veiled meaning. The visible world is complete in itself but it too holds its veiled mysteries. An ancient writer truly said: "We might call the whole world a myth, which contains visible bodies and things, but souls and spirits in a hidden manner."—(Sallust on "The Gods and the World.")

## § II. EXEGESIS.

The principles underlying Hermetic Symbology enter largely in the exegesis or interpretation of myths. Certain general guiding principles, however, may be laid down, embracing their construction, significance and application.

(a) *Construction.* There is a similarity in nearly all myths inasmuch as the localities—historical or purely fabulous—usually denote not only places but also states or realms of existence; the personages, proper names and terms also are employed, as a rule, symbolically; and the events narrated are often extraordinary and permit of more than one interpretation.

(b) *Significance.* Here again, similar stages can be remarked in lifting the veils of nearly all myths.

The first veil is lifted by obtaining the literal explanation and derivation of the proper names and principal terms used.

The second veil is raised by reconstructing the narrative in the light of these literal and suggestive meanings.

The third veil is gradually removed by the aid of reflection, when the symbolical and allegorical significance is applied and developed. This process may be extended, and intuitional flashes obtained, in which there may be glimpses of the infinite truth behind.

(c) *Application and development.* To apply myths is to use them to present and explain aspects of truth. The

majority of true myths are applicable from many standpoints—natural and artistic, moral and ethical, philosophical and metaphysical, religious and theological, mystical and occult. Moreover they may be treated macrocosmically or microcosmically, and correspondences may be traced between them all.

Thus from a simple story, with a literal and finite meaning, we are led stage by stage, to the apprehension of an infinite truth with its application in all realms of consciousness.

These mystery tales are inexhaustible sources of suggestiveness. At different times they hold different messages, and, likewise, different eyes see different messages at the same time.

And, even as the vision of exterior beauty is intensified by the realization of interior beauty, so the beauty embedded in myths is more and more perceived as the Soul's own beauty unfolds.

A myth does not reveal the same mystery to all. It reflects only as much as the eye of the Soul can receive and understand, even as the secrets of Nature, although laid bare, are seen only by the eyes that can behold them with veneration and love.

## § III. EXAMPLE. "THE MYTH OF OSIRIS & ISIS."

### (1) Brief Outline of Narrative.

In the legendary Golden Age of Egypt, Osiris and Isis reigned as King and Queen. They were not only the rulers but also the teachers of their subjects. They were not as their people but were said to have come direct from the Gods; their parents, according to some, being the Divinities Seb and Nut.

For a time all was peace. Then, while Osiris was away in a distant part of his kingdom, his brother Typhon arose to usurp his place.

Eventually, when Osiris returned, Typhon, by cunning, slew him and cut his body into 14 pieces which were scattered over the sacred land of Egypt.

Then began the lamentations and search of Isis for her lost lord. Long did she wander, and as she found fragments of his holy body, so did she bury them and cause tombs and sanctuaries to appear.

At last a son is born to her, named Horus, who becomes the conqueror of Typhon.

Osiris rises again from the dead, ascends into Heaven, and, through his resurrection, becomes the redemption of all who identify themselves with him.

This is but a very cursive story of the myth and does not reveal its beauty, but nevertheless it will be found that in the full narrative there is much of that indescribable beauty which is the special characteristic of the Grand Egyptian Mysteries.

(2) Religio-Mystical Significance (Suggestive).

Egypt may be regarded as symbolical of the field of the Divine operations, in which the mysteries of God are hidden and yet revealed.

The Egyptians may be taken as symbolizing Pan-Humanity.

Nut and Seb represent Heaven and Earth respectively. As such they constitute that principle of duality through which all things proceed from and return to Unity.

Osiris is the Divine Incarnation. God's Idea or Archetype of Man: Potential Perfection.

Isis is the Divine Mother Incarnate.

Typhon is comparable to material darkness, "that which is below," where the universal essence and life of Osiris and Isis are "slain," in a mystical sense.

Horus is comparable to spiritual light, "that which is above"; the re-born or risen Osiris, also called "Osiris-Horus," Actualized Perfection.

This bare outline, which is given merely as an example, may suggest a multitude of interpretations, especially when other details not given here are added.

Osiris, the central figure of the myth, may be considered as personifying the Divine Immanence, the Indwelling Spirit, "slain from the foundation of the world." He is God and also Man. Son of Heaven and Child of Earth.

To be identified with Him, as Osiris-Horus was, according to the Priest-Hierophants of the Pyramid, to become "osirified," "divinized in the Hall of Seb." Without Osiris there was no regeneration, no resurrection, no perfection, but with Him there was, and *is*, Life Everlasting.

# IV.—"HERMETIC MYSTICAL SCIENCE AND ART"

## § I. DEFINITIONS

MYSTICAL Science is the precise delineation of the principles, and the exact formulation of the laws underlying mysticism and mystical concerns.

Mystical Art is the application of these scientific principles and laws to mystical purposes.

Religion is inseparably connected with Mystical Science and Art and cannot properly be divorced therefrom.

For Mystical Science is the culmination of that phase of Religion which aims at the correlation of the outer to the inner and of the partitive to the integral. While Mystical Art is the consummation of that aspect of Religion which ordinates the human nature to the divine. It is a process by which Spiritual Ideals and Types of Divine Science are expressed in the Worlds of Form.

Science should precede Art even as Knowledge should go before Practice; for Science explores the means and Art applies them to the end in view. True Science is therefore essentially illuminative, and true Art essentially perfective.

Special and particular Sciences investigate external causes and effects: Hermetic Science reveals their inner analogy and intelligibility.

Practical Arts put into application that which Special Sciences explain, directing them to useful ends.

Absolute Science is the revelation of True Being: Perfect Art is conscious active union with True Being. Indeed, from the human standpoint, Perfection is the fullest possible expression of Real Being.

## § II. THE PRINCIPLES

The principles substanding Mystical Science and Art are those upon which the Hermetic Laws of Correspondence, Affinity and Expression depend.

There is an intimate correspondence between the micro-

cosm and the macrocosm, the intelligible and the sensible, the inner and the outer.

There is a profound affinity not only between the Divine Unity and the Divine Trinity in Man and in the All, but also between the Divine Plurality and the many faculties of Pan-Humanity.

By Hermetic Mystical Science the principles and laws of the Universe are brought into correspondence and relationship while their mutual interactions and affinities—human and divine—are revealed.

By Hermetic Mystical Art these same principles and laws, thus intimately integrated, are brought forth perfectly expressed.

The light of Hermetic Mystical Science penetrates the veil of multiplicity, explores the deep metaphysical recesses of the Universe, and sheds its luminous rays over all things so that at last the Perfect Divine Order itself is to be seen.

Hermetic Mystical Art, established in the Divine Order, traverses the path opened by the light of Hermetic Science, bringing into perfect ordination and expression all that was latent and unmanifested before.

This alternate ingoing and outgoing, constitutes the life of Mystical Science and Art; the former disclosing the treasures concealed within the centre of the Cosmos and the latter beautifully unfolding them into the Orb of the Circumference in plenary manifestation.

## § III. THE APPLICATION

It is the Soul—universal and human—that is for ever putting into application the principles of Hermetic Science, because, since it subsists midway between primary and and secondary natures, the Soul has affinity with both, and can, not only enter into correspondence with every Order of being in the hierarchy of existence, but also give actual expression to what is potentially inherent.

Therefore, it may be said that the Soul contains all sciences and arts and that its purpose is to realize and apply them.

The Soul's affinity with primary natures is dependent upon the Spirit, *i.e.*, the Logos or Nous, through which the Soul is potentially united (1) by its being to the Divine Unity and

Trinity; and (2) by its life and activities to the Divine Plurality, *i.e.*, the Eternal High Gods; while (3) by its secondary natures and instruments of expression the Soul is united to the universe and humanity.

In the Divine Unity is the Supreme Science of the Soul.

In the Gods is the Pure Art of the Soul, for pure art springs from divine inspiration which, in reality, is the activity of the Gods within the Soul.

In the universe all sciences are applied by the Art of the Gods operating in and through the Soul's secondary natures.

The perfection of the human Soul's Art depends upon its conscious living union with God and the Gods, through the Spirit.

This perfective-union is to be attained by three processes in which the Soul's Art is gradually unfolded,—consciously or unconsciously.

(1) The free expression of the Soul's faculties as they emerge from potentiality into actuality by evolutionary processes; this alone will not accomplish the desired end for it only leads to a certain point.

(2) The assimilation of these faculties to their divine affinities, which is to be accomplished by the action of the personal will when it serves or tries to serve the Divine and is thus converted from self-seeking to the light and life of the Gods.

(3) The elevation and transformation of the Soul's faculties or secondary principles to their primary archetypes by fuller and fuller participation in the Divine.

These three means are summarized as the processes of Evolution, Redemption and Participation all of which have a deep significance when considered in the light of Hermetic Science and Art.

(1) *Evolution*, regarded mystically, has a more profound meaning than when explained solely from a material point of view; not that the latter is untrue but rather that it is only a partial truth which is not always seen in its correct relationship with the universe.

The Soul's essential nature is not subject to evolutionary laws because it is rooted in Spirit, and Spirit cannot truly be

said to evolve. Therefore, evolutionary processes refer to the Soul's activities and secondary natures.

As a result of these activities and by means of the Art of the Gods, the Soul follows the Divine Plan and produces or evolves three instruments of expression, each of which, in turn, is a plural-unity, or a multiplicity in a unity.

These are called the Volitional, Vital and Intellectual Instruments.

The will to exist evolves vehicles of manifestation; the vital principle generates life and stimulates activity, and the intellectual principle develops new contents of consciousness. All these, in the first place, spring from the deep fontal impulses in the Soul—to move, to stand forth, to open out, to unfold, to express, to create and to make manifest. But as a natural consequence of these evolutionary impulses, the Soul changes its centre, and, in a mystical sense, is said to depart from its summit, losing knowledge of its Real Being, and forgetting its allegiance to its Source.

Hence it lapses, so to speak, from the Above to the Below, there to gain experience and knowledge. This is what is implied by the fall and descent of the Soul.

The evolution alone of the Soul's secondary principles cannot restore the Soul to a consciousness of its original but innocent state, because, since these principles are secondary and subsidiary to the Soul, they can neither change the Soul's essential nature nor cause it to be united to that from which it proceeds.

Therefore, it is evident why evolution alone neither changes humanity's essential nature nor leads the Soul of Man to its goal.

Moreover, if the attainment of the goal depended solely upon an infallible natural evolutionary law, then there would be no need for individual effort nor would there be any intrinsic value in it. Mystical Science and Art would have no place in the affairs of mankind. All Souls would be subject, voluntarily or involuntarily, to one General Law and Cosmic Process which they could never transcend.

But purely natural evolutionary processes apply only to humanity's natural principles and cannot affect in any way the Eternal Spiritual Principles, which must necessarily subsist

above the transient and mutable conditions of Nature. Therefore, in order that the Soul may be introduced consciously to its spiritual principles, further processes must be superimposed upon those of evolution.

(2) *Redemption* is the means for restoring the proper relationship between the human and the Divine natures. It is an inner process more than an outer one.

When applied to the Soul, redemptive processes do not necessarily imply any inherent change of nature, but only a conversion of activity by which its secondary principles are redeemed.

Evolution has more to do with leading out from the potential into the actual, while redemption is more concerned with leading out of the actual into the ideal.

The Soul cannot freely and consciously exercise its potential lordship over Nature until it is liberated from the limitations imposed upon it by Nature's conditions and no longer entangled in Matter.

The redemption of the Soul is the removal of its false and illusory alliances; while the redemption of the Soul's secondary principles is their orderly orientation to the Pure Art of the Gods.

Redemption is conversional, *i.e.*, it is the turning away from that which is inordinate, negative and disintegrating.

It is Purgatorial, *i.e.*, the elimination of the effects of this departure from Real Being by the substitution of that which is orderly, positive and integrating or re-integrating.

Redemption is also Regenerational, *i.e.*, the generating anew of the Soul's instruments on higher planes so that they may be used to contact that which is above Nature.

The conversion of the Mind, Heart and Will from ignorance and darkness, selfishness and attachments, and inertia and aimless drifting tendencies, prepares the human nature for the reception of Divine Light, Grace and Strength.

The Purgation of the Soul's secondary vehicles is the dissolution, separation and purification of their impure elements by the Spiritual Life which opens them to the influence of Divine Art through which the whole being is ennobled.

Regeneration is an awakening of the inner life, a quicken-

ing and a re-birth of the Soul's vehicles, elevating them to the participation of Divine Goodness, Truth and Beauty.

Each of the redemptive processes has a beginning in the realms of Time, but each may be continued perpetually, leading to more and more perfect art and to fuller and fuller life and consciousness in all realms of existence and activity.

(3) *Mystical Participation* is communion with the Divine. It is a growing conscious response to the Being, Life and Mind of God by the spiritualization of the Soul's instruments of contact.

From another standpoint it is the action of the Gods upon the Soul, the mystical and magical operations of the Art of the Gods producing in the Soul supernal representations and revelations of Their Glory and Greatness.

Participation attunes the instruments of the Soul to the music of the Gods, and in the enjoyment of Their Inspiration the Soul responds and corresponds to the Divine Harmony.

This is the ultimate function of mystical and religious Art or Spiritual Alchemy.

There are various theories concerning Participation or Divine Inspiration, *e.g.*, that it is by Divine Right, or that it is by Divine Grace, or that it is self-determined.

Each of these is partially true.

When the Soul is united to God through its divine principle, Spirit, it may participate in Him by Divine Right.

When the Soul becomes immersed in Matter as a natural result of evolution and bound to the activities of its secondary principles, it becomes subject to the decrees of Fate and is obliged to wait for what appears to be the intervention of Divine Grace for the removal of its limitations.

Again, the Soul, by entering into intimate relationship with the manifested universe may be said to fall. But it retains its essential inherent purity and can always exercise its Elective Power or Freewill, although it cannot always immediately accomplish what it wills. Hence its conversion to Heaven and to mystical participation is self-determined, because even the Gods cannot redeem the Soul unless it becomes receptive to Their Inspiration or Supernal Breath.

There are four distinct modes by which the Soul may be conjoined to the Gods in mystic participation. These corre-

spond to the four Inspirations distinguished by Plato in the dialogue "Phædrus,"—viz., the Musical, the Telestic, the Prophetic and the inspiration of Mystical Love.

When under the influence of any of these Divine Breaths, the Soul is for the time being transported from the world of the Actual into the Realms of the Ideal.

These Inspirations provide subject matter for subsequent treatment, but each of them has its place in the three principal pathways of Perfective Union, *i.e.*, the Path of Union by Good Works (Telestic), the Path of Union by Knowledge in which the Prophetic Inspiration is especially a requisite, and the Path of Union by Devotion, or Mystic Love, in which Music or Harmony also has its place.

However, the four inspirations are not limited to any one particular pathway, but may enter into all in varying degrees.

The most important, of course, is Mystical Love.

## § IV. THE EFFECTS

The consummation of Hermetic Mystical Science is in the realization of the True even as the consummation of Hermetic Mystical Art is in the attainment of the Beautiful.

Each of the three great processes of Evolution, Redemption and Participation has manifold effects.

Evolution tends to the production of finer and finer vehicles of expression and to a more and more perfect subjugation of Matter to the Formative Principle of the Soul.

Redemption not only purifies and sublimates the Soul's vehicles of expression by purgation, preparing them for the supranatural action of the Gods, but also opens the whole being, by regeneration, to an altogether fuller and deeper realization of Real Being.

Participation, which is the natural fruition of purgation and regeneration, is a re-ascent to the Divine Likeness, a return of the Soul to its Sovereign Source. By it the Soul's vehicles are transformed, reordinated and revivified and brought, Mystically by Sacred Sympathy, into the hands of the Master Artist whose Art is Perfect and whose Acts are absolutely Just.

Sanctification, Transformation and Justification are there-

fore the three primal effects of the Hermetic Mystical Science and Art.

It is evident from these considerations that there is a clear distinction between the purely natural process of Evolution and the altogether supranatural process of Participation.

Man naturally inherits the Kingdom of Earth, but it is only by an awakening to a realization of his true relationships with the Above and his true destiny in regard to the Below, that Man inherits the Kingdom of Heaven.

Not only is Hermetic Mystical Science necessary—the pursuit and perception of the True,—but also Hermetic Mystical Art—the manifestation and perpetuation of the Beautiful; not only Realization but also Attainment.

By the natural progression of Nature towards higher and higher manifestations of the Formative Principle and finer and finer manifestations of the Material Principle, Man evolves the secondary vehicles of his Soul, but it is not until the Soul begins to look above and to be converted to its Principle, the Shining Spirit, that the reception of the Art of the Gods becomes possible. For it is only by and through the Spirit, that Man can participate in that which is above, even as it is only by and through his secondary principles that he can participate in that which is below.

The culture of the Soul's vehicles is very different from their Sanctification, for the way of Participation is not the seeking to attain this goodness or that virtue, but rather the pursuit of the Good Itself. It is indeed the consecration of all things to God, so that all acts become sacramental and all the vehicles of the Soul are sanctified, *i.e.*, made holy.

Again, how different is the sublime transfigurations in the lives of the Great Ones, to the merely natural growth and improvement witnessed in the lives of the unawakened. Evolution may change a man's habits, his thoughts, his actions, but only a Participation in the Divine Art of the Gods can change the tenor of his Soul and give a sublimity and sanctity to his life.

And lastly, the awakened man is justified; his purpose in life is in course of fulfilment, of conscious fulfilment. A holy peace pervades him in the realization of all that can be accomplished under the wise guidance of the Inner Master Artist,

Who brings all acts within the Divine Circle of Accord, confirming and strengthening them and imbuing them with Light and Life and Love.

Hermetic Mystical Science is ultimately the finding and knowing of God, even as Hermetic Mystical Art is ultimately the loving and serving of God.

And by the unification of the two processes in the Soul of the awakened man, his secondary principles are woven into the pattern of perfection as the Divine Wisdom gradually unfolds within his Mind, the Divine Life within his Heart and the Divine Power within his Will.

Such a one is justified, for his is the life Eternal.

# A MANUAL ON THE PATH OF UNION BY GOOD WORKS

(Karma Marga)

# THE PATH OF UNION BY GOOD WORKS

## PROEMIAL.

THE goal of the Path of Knowledge, as such, is God as the Absolute Truth; the goal of the Path of Devotion, is God as the Supremely Beautiful; but the goal of the Path of Union by Good Works or Action, is God as the Highest GOOD.

Man seeks Truth with his mind; he aspires to the Ideal Beauty with his heart; but it is his will that is the dominant factor in his quest for the GOOD.

In the light of Truth he may discern the *reality* in and behind all things, while their ideal order as components of one harmonious whole is revealed to him the more he contemplates them with the eyes of beauty; but their relative degrees of *utility* are dependent upon the measure in which he recognizes them as manifestations of Divine Goodness and the extent to which he is able to apply them as means to One Great End.

Although the mind may know what is Good, and although the heart may aspire to It, yet it is dependent upon the will whether or not the Good is followed.

Therefore, in the Path of Good Works, the will necessarily plays an important part, because neither the mind nor the heart can put into practice what is accepted as true and beautiful without first receiving the impulse from the will.

Because God is Himself the GOOD, pre-eminent even above the highest conceivable Excellence, all Acts of the Divine Will must be absolutely Good, from and to all Eternity. Therefore, the more fully the human will conforms to the Divine Will the more fully does the Divine Excellence enter into all human acts and all that is consequent to them.

The GOOD, then, must enter into all considerations applying to the Path of Union by Works.

The first of these considerations is the volitional, *i.e.*, the human will and its relation with the Divine Will; the second is that of the actions resulting from volition, with their causes and effects; and the third is that of the works performed by voluntary acts—corporeal and spiritual.

## § 1. THE VOLITIONAL AND THE GOOD

### I. The Good and the Divine Will

God as the GOOD is (1) That Great Purpose for which all things are manifested; (2) That Great Object of Love in which all actions have their plenary expression; and (3) That Great End to which all means must be related for their ultimate utility.

The Absolute GOOD is unitary, eternal, and unconditioned, but from It and to It, all partial, transient, and relative goodnesses proceed and return.

Because God is the Absolute Good all that is manifested by His Divine Will must inherently possess potential or actual attributions of Goodness. Even that which appears to be evil is, in some sense, potentially good, for it is only evil when inordinately utilized or when not made to fulfil its good and proper function.

All beings, consciously or unconsciously, desire to possess goodness, therefore the Primary Good transcends all beings and is the Object of Desire to them all.

All beings and things, in all planes and states of consciousness, depend primally upon the Divine Will for their subsistence, because It is the Primal Impulse which called them into being and which causes them to endure.

Through the Divine Will all things are able to move from potential perfection to actual and realized perfection.

The Will of God is Perfect because It eternally and freely wills only that which is absolutely GOOD.

Relative or Lesser Degrees of Goodness are the outcome of the volitional acts of natures inferior to the Primal ONE.

God is Omniscience, therefore He contains within His unfathomable depths the ideas or types of all things, all conditions, all lives, and all activities, in all their multitudinous aspects.

Therefore He must possess the foreknowledge of every possible state of existence, consciousness, and activity, and, by His Providence allow for every imaginable contingency.

Thus He must, of necessity, know more than Humanity in its widest sense can ever conceive, and yet this foreknow-

ledge is so infinite that it does not debar man from having and using freewill.

Moreover, God's Omnipotence is such that every possibility in the realms of Time and Space—inherent either in Nature or in Man—is inevitably turned to good, and, howsoever apparently contradictory, is made to subserve His Solemn Purposes and harmonize with His Holy Ends.

## II. The Human Will.

The human will bears a relative similitude to the Divine Will.

It is the seat of all human potentialities and is the principle which enables them to pass out into the process of actualization.

It is the Self-motive principle of the Soul and, as such, it is perpetually active and free. It only becomes conditional and determinate as a consequence of the effects of its acts.

The Will or Self-Motive power of the Soul enables man to be a free agent and to possess a distinctive individuality of his own. It is also the power which gives him the capacity not only to sanction or veto, but also to intensify every species of mentation that rises into his normal consciousness and every grade of feeling that tends either to enter or to leave his personality.

Therefore, man's Will, *per se*, is not his intellectual, emotional, imaginative, intuitive, psychic, or instinctive faculties, but it is that almost indefinable principle by which he has command over all these functions, although he may not always exercise his authority, either because of ignorance or of inordination.

1. *The human will is Impulsive.* This is its primary volitional function, for each individual's very existence is the result of an initial impulse of the Soul to manifest; so likewise, every thought and feeling and activity of any species comes from an internal or external impulse.

The Impulsive aspect of man's will may be personal, spiritual, or natural.

It is personal when it is the fiat in all purely human actions.

It is spiritual when the human will is in harmony with the divine, and voluntarily submits to Its promptings.

It is natural when it blindly, involuntarily, or deliberately follows such impulses of Nature as the purely animal or vegetal tendencies.

2. *The human will is Elective.*

Because, although it is impulsive it is also judicial, and may therefore be repulsive or even compulsive. For example, antipathy causes it to repulse certain tendencies and influences, while an innate conscience of what is right and wrong may give it what seems a compulsive aspect.

By the Elective power of his will, man is able always to choose between what he considers good and evil, right and wrong, moral and unmoral, and so on.

This free electiveness is positive and negative, active and passive.

It is positive or active when it elects to affirm or confirm any intellectual, affectional, or other tendency that the personality receives the impulse to follow.

It is negative or passive when it does not consciously give affirmation to such tendencies.

It is positive when it consciously resists tendencies deemed to be undesirable, but negative when it passively permits the mind or heart or body to follow them.

Furthermore, impulses may be neutralized, *e.g.*, when, through fear or shock, volition is suspended and, as it were, temporarily paralyzed, being unable to act. Incidentally, this verifies in a striking manner the fact that the human will, as such, always seeks that which it deems to be Good, for when suddenly confronted with what appears to be wholly evil and undesirable it momentarily ceases altogether to act voluntarily.

3. *The human will is Purposive.* Every impulse that is affirmed by the will is pursued for a definite or indefinite purpose.

It is through this aspect of the will that actions receive their motive or intention, which may be personal or impersonal.

They are impersonal when the motive of an act is wholly altruistic and unreservedly consecrated to the divine. But they may also be impersonal when there is no definite inten-

tion present; for then the activity is not a conscious one, and therefore not personal, but un-personal.

III. The Perfection of the Human Will.

The perfection of the human will does not consist so much in the development of any intrinsic attributes, as in the steady progress of bringing it into conformity to the Perfect Will of God.

The Higher Self of man spontaneously seeks the Highest Good because in that alone is the completion of its being. It perpetually aspires to this Good although the quests of the lower self for lesser goods may intermittently intervene.

The perfection of the human will is to be accomplished by the right ordination of the impulsive, elective, and purposive functions to the GOOD through their control, conformity, and purity.

The control of impulses is of vital importance, because all acts result from them. To act blindly according to an impulse is not a true act of the human volition, but merely an imitation of the natural will of a bird or a beast. There can be little individual progress of any kind until impulses are made subservient to worthy ends, for Right Volition stands for Higher Obedience to all that leads to the GOOD, by which alone all impulses are spiritualized.

The personal impulsive propensity is provoked by self-will, passion, and combativeness, which also tend to animalize it. But it is mitigated by humility, self-denial, and submission to the Divine.

The simplest means for controlling impulses of every kind is to make a rule never to act upon them without first deliberately electing so to do.

The exercise of the Elective faculty is determined largely by one's innate sense of the rightness, the desirableness, or the fitness of the impending action.

This sense is sometimes termed the Conscience which may be regarded as representing a standard of judgement evolved from the sum total of one's experience and knowledge.

A moral act is one that is performed in accordance with the Conscience, while an immoral act is one which the will permits although contrary to the dictates of this individual standard of morality.

As no two individuals are identical in this respect there can be no one criterion of goodness for all, except the Universal.

The use of the Conscience, or moral faculty, may be decided by the senses, the sentiment, the instinct, the reason, or the intuition of the individual, or it may be at the promptings of mystical love.

Thus, there may be the call of the senses influencing some external impulse, or one may be moved by sentimental reasons to obey a certain impulse, or again, one may instinctively shrink from carrying out some action, or be urged by reason to refrain; or further, the compelling power may arise from the intuition.

Each, or all, of these influences may be at the base of the Conscience or seem to speak in the name of the Conscience. And because there can be a reasonable conscience, an instinctive conscience, and an intuitive conscience, it is evident that the human Conscience, as such, is by no means infallible but is prone to err through deficiency of realization.

However, as the results of the lessons of life are more thoroughly assimilated, one's standard of judgement becomes more reliable and comprehensive, and the Conscience moulds one's life accordingly without any effort to remember rules and precepts. This is its useful function, but even then it is only human and stands in need of a higher and superior principle to confirm its dictates and decisions.

The Conscience, therefore, is not spiritual, *per se*, but it may be spiritualized by mystical love, that is, when actions are performed purely for the love of God and in conformity with the Divine Will. The Conscience in this case becomes that Inner Compulsion which is to each individual mystic the urging of his own Inward Monitor.

The free and normal use of the Elective faculty, which is at the back of the Conscience, is simplified by the differentiation of passion and reason; for intense feeling frequently causes actions which calm reason knows to be unwise and wrong. The higher feelings or aspirations, known as the mystical love of God, are really rooted in the will rather than in the emotions because in the primary order of things the volition is prior to the affections and is thus nearer the summit of the human nature where it verges to that which is above it.

The will may be regarded as a focusing point towards which forces are concentrated and from which they may be directed. Hence what is called "the power of the will," for although the will itself is not exactly a force, yet it can give power to gnostic and vital forces when it so elects, by releasing them in definite directions. The will always has free choice to do this, although on account of a multiplicity of causes and effects it is not always free to accomplish what it wills.

The ideal path to true liberty is that by mystical love, to which there is no barrier. All human faculties, in themselves considered, are confined within certain limits but when the will is united to the divine, the faculties are spiritually intensified and limitations are transcended.

The Purposive aspect of the will, being that which gives a definite intention to individual or collective acts, is dependent for its perfection upon purity of motive.

The dignity of man is commensurate with the altitude of his ideals and the dominant intention of his life. This dignity is made manifest in proportion as he fully and freely wills only that which is good conformably to that which he knows to be true.

A good intention and a lofty ideal do not justify evil means.

Goodness in conformity with Truth is Justice. Justice is the manifestation of the Good Law, and the Law is the Word of God which is Supreme Wisdom.

For the accomplishment of its purposes the will requires strength.

There are various human means for strengthening the will but however proficient it may become through these they are still personal and therefore limiting. When by purity of intention the will is polarized Godwards it is impersonalized and begins to participate in divine Omnipotence.

The Impulsive aspect of the will is strengthened by Temperance; the Elective aspect by Justice, and the Purposive aspect by Prudence; while a unification of the three produces the fourth cardinal virtue of Fortitude.

All purposive acts that are carried out with temperance, justice, and prudence, in opposition to inordinate desires,

disinclinations or other deterrents are valuable aids to confirming and strengthening the will in its self-imposed discipline of conformity to the divine. The more numerous and difficult the obstacles which the will overcomes the stronger and more courageous is its character.

Fear of earthly things paralyzes and weakens the will, but Fear of God—*i.e.*, Reverential Awe—while suspending the operations of the human will, introduces it to the Perfect Volition of the GOOD.

# THE PATH OF UNION BY GOOD WORKS

## § 2. ACTIONS, THEIR CAUSES AND EFFECTS.

### I. Causes.

Action is volitional impulse in operation.

All processes incidental to the emergence of the actual out of the potential, and all processes ministering to the transformation of the actual into the ideal, are actions.

The former are outward tending; while the latter are more inward in their nature.

All actions must have objects; there can be no effective activity without something to act upon.

Activities, in relation to their objects, are energies.

Every action has an Agent or Subject of its activity, and every Agent or Subject has a Patient or Object of its energy.

The Agent of the action imparts the impulse; the Patient receives the energy resulting from the impulse.

Every activity has a Cause as well as an Agent, and every energy has an Effect as well as a Patient.

Both activities and energies in their manifestation are subject to the law of Cause and Effect, and neither the nature acting, nor the nature acted upon, is exempt from this law.

In order to understand properly the nature of any particular effect, it is necessary to know what kind of action, or combination of actions, produced it; while to understand the nature of the action, it is necessary to know the kind of cause or causes that governed it.

The law of Cause and Effect is based upon the fact that action produces change, for every effect is simply a manifestation of a change arising in the nature acting and the nature acted upon. Prior changes, or changes resulting from initial actions, may give rise to posterior changes and effects, becoming their immediate causes, and thus Cause and Effect may alternate indefinitely, and for this reason the initial causes of actions are not always evident.

Causes may be classified in several ways; for instance:—
Primary and Secondary Causes,
Prior and Posterior Causes,
Ideal and Actual Causes,
or, Divine, Spiritual, Human, and Natural Causes,
or, again, according to the division of Aristotle, into the Final, Efficient, Formal, and Material Causes.

The First Cause is God as the ONE; the Final Cause is God as the GOOD.

From the First Cause all Secondary Causes proceed, and to the Final Cause they are all directly or indirectly related.

The ONE is the Exempt Cause of Causality, and is not *a* cause in the literal sense, but rather It is the Divine Origination.

The First Cause is Unitary, Infinite, Eternal, Providential, and Ideal.

Secondary Causes are Multiplex, Finite, Temporal, Karmic, (*i.e.*, subject to Fate) and Actual.

The First Cause is Unitary because It is the Supreme *Raison d'être* whence all things receive their intelligibility and unity.

It is Infinite because It is absolutely unconditioned, unlimited, and unparticularized.

It is Eternal because It is beginningless and endless, for ever abiding as the Final Norm which Time can never overpass.

It is Providential because It transcendentally contains within Itself the effects of Its own causes, and thus efficiently provides for all possibilities and potentialities with consummate omniscience.

It is Ideal because It is Itself the Integral Idea which embraces all potentialities, as well as the Supreme Archetype to which all possibilities are related for their perfection.

Secondary Causes are Multiplex because they are the causes of particularization and differentiation.

They are Finite because they are conditioned, limited, and determined.

They are Temporal because the processes by which they unfold latent effects are necessarily successive and qualified by Time.

They are Karmic because they do not contain within themselves the *actual* effects of their own causes, but these effects become separate posterior causes of further effects.

But although Secondary Causes do not contain their actual effects, the causes themselves are actual because they are formal and material and proximately govern the processes whereby potentiality passes into actuality.

All Divine Causes are Unitary, Infinite, Eternal, Providential, and Ideal.

Natural Causes are Multiplex, Finite, Temporal, Karmic, and Actual.

Human Causes are Natural and Spiritual; they follow the same laws as Natural Causes, in so far as they spring from the natural impulses of human nature, but they are Spiritual in proportion as man is able to unite his personal will to the Will Divine.

## II. Actions.

The whole universe is a body of lives, motions, and activities, all characterized by time and subject to laws.

Movement and activity imply change, growth, increase, decay, etc. Each prior change bears a causal relation with each posterior action. Thus, every activity of every being is a link not only in the sequential series of activities of individual lives, but also in the vast chain of activities which represent the progress of the collective lives and energies of the universe.

Action, in this broad sense, is sometimes called Karma, according to which the nature of every effect is pre-determined by the law governing it; thus, in a certain conditional sense, each effect potentially inheres in its secondary as well as its final cause, and every activity is a process of unfolding the content of a cause.

The fields of Action, or Karma, embrace all existences that are subject to change.

Where there is no change there is no Action or Karma or Fate.

Since God is eternally immutable He is not active in the literal sense, but rather is He the First Originator and Final Object of all Action.

Divine Action, which can only be predicated of God causally and analogically, is essentially super-karmic because it is exempt from change and totally unimpeded.

Action in the Spiritual Macrocosm is eternal, providential, and ideal, but in the material world it is temporal, karmic, and actual, and is to be seen in the manifold processes underlying all manifestation, especially in that action called evolution.

All the forces of nature are aspects of this action, or karma, which is re-actional and inter-actional, and extends from the highest kingdoms of nature to the last of things.

The lower the aspect of this action, the more numerous and hidden are the antecedent causes behind its proximate and actual causes.

No energy is ever lost, but if inoperative in one field of action it passes on to some other sphere.

So likewise all actions must inevitably produce effect, although not necessarily of the nature intended.

The Microcosmic field of action embraces the spiritual as well as the corporeal world, because the Soul of man not only acts through and upon the body, but also in and with the Spirit.

The Spirit is in reality the principle of activity, while the Soul is a self-active principle and the body an alter-motive or moved principle.

Spirit is the agent of the Divine, while Soul is its patient.

Soul, in turn, is the agent of Spirit, while the body is its patient.

Spiritual acts are super-karmic; so also are the acts of the Soul when in accord with Spirit.

The acts of the body are karmic; so also are those of the Soul when it acts purely from corporeal impulses.

The quality of an action and the nature of its karmic or super-karmic effects are determined by the dignity of its final cause, the degree in which the agent is identified with that cause, and the measure in which the energy operating upon or through the patient corresponds to the activity impelled by the agent.

Action may be creative or destructive, supportive or counteractive, in character.

It is creative when capable of manifesting and reproducing

its formal cause; as in the case of all generation and in the whole sphere of art, in so far as it imparts form to matter.

It is destructive when it results from the intervention of a superior cause, or when it is so powerful and dynamic that, temporarily or permanently, it suspends or destroys the effects of previous action, as, for example, when growth is arrested by corruption, or when generation is changed into degeneration, or when, through supernatural causes, generative energy is changed into that which is regenerative, and corruption is arrested by incorruption.

Action, or Karma, is supportive when sufficiently powerful to maintain or reproduce its own effects, and thus to continue the carrying out of its purposes over a successive number of acts or combination of activities. All action that is repetitional or habitual is of a supportive character, so also is that which is cumulative and dynamic, pending a suitable opportunity for its manifestation. Indeed, it may be said that all action, in a certain sense, is supportive, and when it is too weak to accomplish its own purpose, it is not lost, but, by an infallible karmic law, it is made subservient to, and therefore supportive of, some other object.

Action is counteractive when it directly opposes supportive karma, or when present action tends to mitigate, interrupt, or transform past acts and their consequences. The counteractive power of present action over past action is proportionate to its dignity and the superiority of its cause. For instance, the ardour of spiritual aspiration is a higher form of activity than that of animal passion,—thus, true prayer, as an interior spiritual act, is strongly counteractive of the effects of past acts, hence its potency in the mystical life.

All of these forms of Karma, or Action, may be good or bad, meritorious or demeritorious, seen or unseen, inward or outward, but right action may be defined as that which is performed at the right time and place in rigid conformity with that which is true.

All right action is positive and integrative, and tends to increase individual being, life, and intelligence, but all wrong action tends to decrease or destroy them by a disintegration of being, a negation of life, and a privation of intelligence.

III. Effects.

As every action contains inherently its impending effect, the term karma embraces effects as well as actions.

Every primary cause is the exempt leader of a series of secondary proximate causes; therefore the effects of these causes are multiplex. Past actions are causal in respect to present actions, while the present are causal to future actions.

Since actions and their actual causes are qualified by time, and place, and circumstance, or by a concatenation of these and other incidental factors, their effects may be more or less modified according as these factors are favourable or otherwise. Some effects are the necessary results of certain causes, but others may be incidental and even, apparently, accidental.

Thus an element of Chance and Fortune may seem to enter into actions and their fruits, but nevertheless they are all still the necessary outcome of specific causes and cannot happen without a reason.

The law of karma, in the absolute sense, is certain and irrefragable, although its intricate operations are not always perceptible because of the numerous incidental factors involved.

No Action, or Karma, can be altogether non-effective. It may be indefinitely effective, remotely effective, or immediately effective.

It is always, more or less, immediately effective in the realm where it first operates, but, by reaction, it is proportionately remotely effective in other realms.

It is immediately effective when unopposed, and when adapted to the time and place and purpose for which it is intended.

But it is remotely or indefinitely effective when incomplete, or when unsuitable and dependent upon subsequent action, or re-action, or future favourable circumstances.

It is also indefinitely effective when by itself alone it produces no direct result but merges into other activities and contributes to other effects than those intended.

Action is more quickly effective of its object the less resistance it has to overcome, and the more opportune and appropriate it is to the end in view.

The immediateness of the effect is not dependent upon the power of the energy in an action, for the weakest and most

trivial of acts may produce almost instantaneous results, while the most weighty and potent of actions are often remote as regards both the time and place of their effects.

The timeliness of an action is the factor of paramount importance in determining its effectiveness. Hence the motto: Strike while the iron is hot.

The apparent non-effectiveness of Action, or Karma, on some occasions is because it is untimely, or because its objective is not present, or because its effects are not visible on the plane of operation.

Every deed, every word, every thought, every sentiment, has an effect, be it immediate or remote, definite or indefinite, good or bad, seen or unseen, and this, not only upon the individual or organism acting, but also upon all other beings or organic wholes that come within the sphere of direct or indirect influence.

Hence effects are individual and collective.

There are many aspects of collective Karma; for example, that of family, social, or national life, in which all share to some extent in the effects of the merits and demerits of each other and of all their predecessors.

Truly, no man can live unto himself alone.

According to the strength and intimacy of the bond that unites individuals into organic wholes, whether social, fraternal, religious, national, or otherwise, so does this mutual or collective Karma become more potent in its effects.

Individual and also collective Karma may be modified by personal and impersonal motives, which necessarily qualify not only actions but likewise the nature of their effects.

Personal action springs from various motives, such as self-preservation, self-assertion, and self-giving. It may be for one's own well-being, or for that of others; it may produce ill-effects upon oneself, or upon others.

But impersonal action, as here understood, has Ideal Causes and springs from motives in which the personal self has no part. Therefore the effects are super-personal and super-karmic. They are performed for the sake of the GOOD and not for any merely personal reward. They and their merits are left in the Hands of Divine Providence, which is able to turn all things to good because the Final Cause of all causes is the GOOD.

In the same way, the Efficient Cause of Action is ultimately in the True, therefore Order must eventually emerge even out of disorder.

But in so far as any cause departs from the True it ceases to be truly efficient, becoming productive of erroneous action and inordinate consequences.

For instance, false teachings invariably lead to false action and thus produce evil effects.

Teachings that are partially true and partially false are productive of either good or evil according to which aspect is accentuated and acted upon. But if a teaching is wholly true, and if it is rightly understood and acted upon at the right time and in the right place, then the effect must ultimately be wholly good. From this it is self-evident that those who propagate doctrines of whatsoever kind cannot escape from sharing in some degree in the karmic effects resulting from those acts which are determined or prompted by such teachings.

Therefore, a careful consideration of the precise nature of the effects likely to follow from the communication of any teaching, or the imparting of any counsel, is equally as important as the consideration of the veracity and rightness of that teaching or counsel.

Moreover, a true teaching taught at the wrong time and in the wrong place, must necessarily produce wrong effects. This is an explanation of a large portion of the wrong conduct of humanity in every age.

Every action that is fully, freely, and deliberately willed by the impulsive, elective, and purposive powers of the human volition depends upon the Good, the True, and the Beautiful for its perfection.

For even as the Final Cause of every impulse must have its object in the Good, and even as the Efficient Cause of every freely-willed action must be established in the True, so the Formal Cause of every action must have for its intention the manifestation of the Beautiful.

He, alone, acts sublimely whose will is fixed upon the Good, whose mind is opened to the light of the True, and whose heart is moved by the glory of the Beautiful.

# THE PATH OF UNION BY GOOD WORKS

## § 3. THE NATURE OF GOOD WORKS

ALL human works are the outcome of actions resulting from the primal powers of the human will. The nature of such works is decided by the elective power of the will which, in conjunction with the mind, chooses some particular manner or method of performing the work. The origin and purpose of every human work pre-exists in the impulsive and purposive aspects of the will, whence all action is released and regulated, impelled and directed.

Besides the elective element of human works, which plays a large part in the manner of their fulfilment, certain other factors incidentally intervene, such as the degree of timeliness for the precipitation of such works and the question as to whether environment is suitable for their direct expression.

There is also to be considered the question of the dispositions or pre-dispositions of both the Agent and Patient, of the subject acting and the object acted upon.

Therefore if human activities are to culminate in Good Works, they must be not only good in themselves, good in their intention, aim, and effect, but they must be performed and received in the right attitude of mind, at the right time, and in the right place, so that they possess not only an intrinsic but also an extrinsic goodness.

The perfection of such works is dependent upon certain influences superimposed upon the laws and principles regulating their operation. And the degree of their perfection depends upon how far such influences are Divine rather than human, spiritual rather than corporeal.

The Demiurgic or Fabricative Works of God are sevenfold. In like manner the principal human Good Works fall into a septenary classification, which may be divided into two categories,—the Seven Outer or Corporeal Good Works, and the Seven Inner or Spiritual Good Works.

The first category may be conveniently divided into the seven Outward Works,—to give, to serve, to help, to heal, to

comfort, to support good works, and to be courteous. These are considered from a corporeal standpoint with the field of their activity as the Sensible and Outer World, in and upon which they act directly and immediately. They have, of course, an inner and spiritual aspect which is included in the corresponding Spiritual Good Works, and these fall very naturally under the following seven inner activities :—to love, to pray, to counsel, to convert, to hope, to instruct, and to revere. These are considered from a spiritual standpoint with the field of their activity as the Spiritual or Interior World, whence they radiate upon the Corporeal and Outer Universe, although naturally, they have an outward aspect as well.

The seven Outer Good Works tend to strengthen the will to action and to increase the effectiveness of its impulsive energies for the cause of benevolent ministration.

The seven Inner Good Works tend more to elevate the human will and to increase the depth and extent of its impulsive influences for the cause of the Supreme Good.

The Object of all Good Works is the manifestation of plenitude of being, fuller and deeper life, and greater intelligence in all spheres of activity.

### (*a*) The Seven Corporeal Good Works.

#### (1) To Give.

"Every good gift and every perfect boon is from Above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there can be no variation."—James 1/17.

All beings for ever depend upon the Charity of the Divine Father, whose gifts are shed in abundance by the Holy Spirit upon all beings according to the measure of their receptivity.

Human givers are in reality the dispensers of the Gifts Divine, and human gifts are but the gifts of God, gathered, moulded, and adapted for various special purposes.

To the plenitude of receptivity, to the power of adaptability, and to the wisdom of distribution, the gifts of humanity owe their value and efficacy, but their intrinsic beneficence depends upon the spirit in which they are given and received.

No man can give who has not first received. No man can receive except what has first been given. Therefore the true spirit of giving and receiving should include a

recognition of the Divine Goodness, and the sense of gratitude should inspire both donor and recipient alike.

To accept a gift in the right spirit is just as important as to bestow a gift in the right spirit, so that there may be a mutual blessing of love, of grace, and of gratitude to enhance the significance of the act.

He who refuses to receive because he cannot give something in return is really influenced by false pride, and he who refuses to give because he has no hope of recompense cannot himself receive supernally, and both these inordinate states of consciousness imply that the Divine Source of all gifts has neither been recognized nor revered.

The act of giving in its highest aspect is a sublime sacrament of love, which is its own reward; for in the act of giving, man becomes receptive to greater gifts, and therefore by an infallible law, the more that man is able to give, the more he is able to receive.

In proportion as the whole human race becomes animated with the true spirit of liberality, poverty in all its aspects must correspondingly disappear.

It is a beautiful practice to make a rule to give to each unknown brother who asks, or who is evidently in need,—however small the gift,—and it should be remembered that it is better to give to many unworthy ones than to allow one in real need to go by without help.

No man is so poor that he has nothing to give, for if he be not endowed with much wealth or commodities, he still has his personal accomplishments to place at the service of humanity, and behind these there is the gift of himself—the greatest gift of all—for in giving this he exercises the very noblest of his prerogatives, in imitation of the ineffable bounty of the Creator Lord, who ceaselessly gives Himself to all his creatures.

### (2) To Serve.

> "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there also shall my servant be; if any man serve Me, him will the Father honour."—John 12/26.

All men have received so much from God, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, that it is incumbent on them to serve as well as to give.

All men, however poor their circumstances and environment, are born into a world wondrously enriched and endowed, and they owe more to their fellow-beings for the tremendous works of the present and the past than they can ever hope to repay; therefore, there is an obligation upon every man to apply himself to some form of employment or mutual service. Not only is it man's duty to labour in some specific and chosen field, but also to render service wherever he knows it will be acceptable and whenever he is called upon to do so.

It is the duty of every man to make himself as useful and efficient in as wide a field as possible, and it is his privilege to attain thorough proficiency in the particular form of labour chosen by himself. The value of his service depends, among other factors, upon the wholehearted manner in which he applies himself to his work, while the measure of his service is the extent of his usefulness in all spheres of life.

There is seldom any need to go in quest for opportunities of serving, but more often it is requisite to do that which is nearest at hand, and to remember that the serving of God implies the utilization of every opportunity and the fulfilment of every obligation.

Larger spheres of usefulness are opened to those who faithfully perform the more menial tasks that come their way, and the perfect performance of small acts of service must necessarily precede the accomplishment of works of greater significance and importance.

With the acceptance and fulfilment of higher and more universal forms of service, there comes a corresponding degree of lordship. It is only the true servants who become true masters, and the greatest Masters have always been the greatest Servants.

There is a spirit of Piety inseparable from true Service, whereby a man's work becomes his religion and all his acts are transformed into one single continuous prayer. Then it is that to work is to pray.

And even as he who gives himself in true holiness exercises the prerogative of Deity and becomes His representative on earth, so he who consecrates himself to the service of God and humanity, becomes the exemplar of all servants.

(3) To Help.

"They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, 'Be of good courage.'"—(Is., 41/6.)

Not only has man his own work to do, his own special service to perform, but also it is his duty to participate in various forms of organized work and to blend harmoniously his own life with the lives of others.

By the spirit of wholehearted Service, man fulfils his own life, but by the spirit of Helpfulness he enters into the lives of others, and freely co-operates with them in the great process of beautifying and uplifting the world.

No man can live entirely to himself alone, for all the members of the human race are bound together by innumerable ties and depend upon each other for all the most practical and immediate necessities of life. Therefore it is the duty of every man, not only to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked and to harbour the harbourless, but also to help others in every possible way in the true spirit of friendliness and fraternity.

The spirit of Helpfulness manifests itself wherever the individual seeks to live and work for others rather than for himself. It implies an active interest in the lives of others, a thoughtful vigilance, a ready willingness, a constant consideration for the comfort and happiness of others, an intelligent adaptability and a ready self-denial.

While it is a useful practice to extend the spirit of ministry to all beings, it is unwise to be over-anxious, over-eager, and officious in trying to aid others, because this often causes discomfort and annoyance, especially in cases where help is neither sought nor solicited. But it is possible to help others unawares by invigorating thoughts, cheering words, and the spirit of affection and of joy.

The secret of helpfulness lies in the attainment of universal harmony.

(4) To Heal.

"Heal the sick . . . and say unto them—The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."—Luke 10/9."

All men are not especially called to be healers, but some more than others are naturally able to alleviate suffering and

to ease pain. Although cases of sickness and disease in their more advanced stages are entrusted to the care of those who have devoted their lives to the science of healing, opportunities come to everyone to tend the sick and to perform little acts of love for those who are incapacitated in any way.

To the alleviation of pain, and sorrow, and suffering, all men are called, but few there are who possess the true gift of healing.

Behind the power of healing lies the spirit of Understanding, the spirit of Life, the spirit of Rest, and the spirit of Peace. Those who have learnt the secret of living interiorly and centrally, those who themselves possess an abundance of life and are able to give out that life to others, those who dwell ever in the spirit of rhythm and repose, are the best of natural healers. With such qualities as sympathy, compassion, and gentleness added to these powers, such men are able to heal by their very presence. The greatest of natural healers are those who have the power to give life to others, and wherever channels are opened for the influx of new life, the power of healing becomes operative.

But there is a still higher form of healing, such as of the Saints and the Great Ones, the power to heal immediately and instantaneously by touch, by word, or even by silence. This supernatural healing power should be the ideal of all true mystics, for all things are possible to those who love and possess a living faith.

(5) To Comfort.

> "Blessed be . . . . . the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—II. Cor. 1/4.

Besides the duties of giving, serving, helping, and healing, there is the duty to comfort and to protect.

The weak ones of the world need the protection of those who are filled with the spirit of Fortitude, and the sorrowing ones need the comfort of those who possess the spirit of Compassion.

To comfort those in trouble with cheering words and loving acts, to sweeten sorrow with the spirit of peace, to visit the

downcast and forsaken, to bring hope to the forlorn and oppressed, to shelter the weak from those who would take advantage of their weakness, and to carry the spirit of courage and gladness to all—such are the fruits of Fortitude and Compassion.

To comfort is not only to calm and compose, but also to confer strength. The best way to comfort is to re-awaken aspiration, to arouse the powers of will, and to help to liberate the mind and heart from all oppression.

Much may be done by the spiritual Votive Exercise, and also by that spirit of expectation, whereby the oppressed rise up out of their misfortune because they have forgotten their weakness in the presence of strength.

The great Souls who themselves suffer most are usually the most compassionate, and the very presence of the mighty of heart, and the mighty of mind, the magnanimous ones, is often sufficient to inspire the weak and suffering with the spirit of Fortitude.

(6) To Support Good Works.

> "For I say not this, that others may be eased, and ye distressed, but by equality; your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want."—II. Cor. 8/13, 14.

Not only is it incumbent upon every man to perform Good Works himself, but it is also his duty to support the Good Works of others.

Wherever a section of the human race becomes organized for the fulfilment of some good purpose, or the realization of some ideal, it is the duty of every member of that organization not only to demonstrate his loyalty and fidelity by professing and propagating the principles for which it stands, but also to support the work in every possible way.

Wherever real enthusiasm thoroughly dominates any organization, there is at once a spontaneous willingness on the part of every member to support the movement, not only by the personal giving of money and other material gifts, but also by those little acts of service which have an importance of their own.

No man can truly share in the life and spirit of an organi-

zation without wholeheartedly supporting it, and he who will not minister to its material needs seldom participates in its spiritual merits.

It is the duty of all to contribute to the maintenance of organizations and individuals pledged to the service of God and humanity.

### (7) To Be Courteous.

"Finally be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."—I. Peter 3/8.

A love or charity that does not embrace all classes of beings is neither universal nor real, neither is there true fellowship and brotherhood where the practice of friendliness is not extended to all.

All human beings have a right to be treated with friendliness and respect, the former increasing in proportion to their nearness and need, and the latter in proportion to their position and dignity.

Homage should be paid to every species of greatness, and the Great Ones should be reverenced for the sake of the virtues which they manifest.

Those who are anxious for the welfare of others are thoughtful and considerate concerning them, and courtesy is the natural and practical expression of this good feeling.

Courtesy requires that cordiality should pervade every human relationship, and should be expressed with grace and natural charm.

Due consideration for the comfort and happiness of others is the first care of the courteous, while their second care is to be themselves amiable in disposition, affable in demeanour, and gracious in manner.

The spirit of courtesy is made manifest wherever there is reverence in the Soul, and this virtue is invariably found in those who have attained to some degree of dignity, and some measure of social lordship. Indeed the greatest masters are those who are courteous to the most menial of their servants.

The spirit of Courtesy pervades all other Good Works, conferring on them grace, beauty, and dignity in the modes of their expression.

# THE PATH OF UNION BY GOOD WORKS

## (*b*) The Seven Spiritual Good Works

### (1) To Love.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—(Deut., 6/5, and Lev., 19/18.)

The great commandment is in the course of fulfilment whenever a Soul resolves to find God, to know God, and to serve God, not only as the Infinite and Transcendent ONE, but also as immanent and indwelling in His Creation and in all His creatures.

No man can cease to love God when once he has found God and known God, and no man can cease to love humanity when once he has loved God.

Those who are greatest in the realization of basic Truth are also the greatest in Love, for in Truth perpetual Beauty is to be found, and wherever there is Beauty there also is Love.

Whenever the Soul recognizes that which is akin to its true nature; whenever it finds Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, whether in the heights of contemplation, in the wonders of creation, or in the deeds of fellow Souls, then the great principle of Love arises spontaneously in instant response.

This recognition is the fundamental condition of love, for of all principles, love is the most spontaneous, and there is no direct or deliberate way of becoming active in love, save, as Plato says, in the pursuit and perpetuation of the Beautiful.

If it were universally realized that every Soul is under the "shadow of the Almighty," that every Soul draws its Being, Life, and Intelligence, from the Eternal One, ever resting and abiding in His Presence, then the great commandment would be universally fulfilled. Or again, if the wonderful potentialities in the Souls of others were apprehended, and their innate virtues revealed, the love of each one would go out to every fellow-Soul.

This universal all-embracing love is the great active Good Work that makes the whole world kin.

For, as a Spiritual Good Work, to love is to touch the Souls of others, to reach inward to the centre—to the heart—and to give and serve, according to the needs of each and every one.

Love is the entrance to Life, even as Knowledge is the entrance to Love. To love God is to enter into the Life of God, and to love man is to enter into the life of man.

Active love implies a fraternal participation in the lives of others, an open communion with all, and a sincere desire and endeavour to find and reverence the hidden Lord in every creature.

Love is the giving of the self, and self-giving is the foundation of all Spiritual Good Works.

To reveal the hidden self, to give freely, to stand open to each one, to enter into the hidden heart, and, above all, to forgive, such are the ways of the Spirit of Love.

(2) To Pray.

"Thou shall make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee."—(Job, 22/27.)

"Pray without ceasing."—(1 Thess., 5/17.)

By prayers of supplication, man opens himself to God; by prayers of intercession he calls Divine Gifts upon others, reaching inward to their Souls. Because all men are for ever dependent upon the Divine, prayer is a universal privilege and necessity; it is only those who do not recognize this Truth who fail to appreciate and understand the power and purpose of prayer.

Prayer draws forth practical precepts. Perfection in prayer does not consist only in the contemplation of Divine things, or in interior discourse by which one follows spiritual tastes, but in practice and in work; in so rightly establishing life that, from the practical light of prayer, one is directed and effectively moved to deeds of service.

As a Spiritual Good Work, Prayer is more especially directed to the welfare of others, usually taking the form of Intercession. Thus every individual should pray in an impersonal and collective manner for the deliverance of humanity and for the upliftment of all, as well as for the special and immediate needs of those who are nearest to him.

It is a beautiful practice to lift up the heart and mind silently to God in prayer that all beings may be touched by the Divine Presence and may receive what they need to make them whole. Instead of inwardly or outwardly criticizing others, everyone can learn to practice this silent invocation.

With this Spiritual Good Work it is incumbent upon everyone to recognize and remember that when the Divine Will and Power are invoked, the human will must remain in abeyance in order to leave the way open for the operations of the Divine.

The practice of prayer should be extended throughout all the actions of the day so that life may become one single continuous prayer and that everything may be performed for the glory of God and the liberation of mankind.

The prayer of the humble may accomplish equally as much as the prayer of the exalted. Just a little lifting up of the heart and mind suffices, with an unreserved faith and trust in God. And when the prayer has gone forth there should be an unshakeable conviction that such a prayer has been answered in the innermost and will bear fruit even in the outermost.

(3) To Counsel.

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."—(Prov., 27/9.)

"He that hearketh unto counsel is wise."—(Prov., 12/15.)

To counsel, as a Spiritual Good Work, is to bring Divine Guidance to mankind. Those who are filled with the Spirit of Counsel are those who are themselves led and guided interiorly; those who are prompted to speak in the name of God by the Power of the Indwelling Spirit.

The way of counsel is simple, natural, spontaneous. In Spiritual Counsel, neither he who ministers nor he who is in doubt, may be conscious at the time of helping or of being helped. But afterwards the words or actions have added significance, and the one in doubt is led, almost unawares, on the path of Wisdom. When there is a definite idea of giving advice, (which is usually accompanied by a subtle sense of superiority,) more often than not, harm is done rather than good. In counsel there is a natural and easy sympathy; and

this, when touched by the Spirit, finds expression in almost imperceptible signs which, on account of their spontaneity, readily appeal to the mind and heart of the one in need of counsel.

Behind the Spirit of Counsel there is an easy adaptability, a sweet gentleness, a fundamental sense of equality, and a power that reaches inward by the sympathy of instant response.

Mysteriously, imperceptibly, unconsciously, the right thing is said and done at the right time and in the right place, in perfect concord and harmony.

Those in doubt need the revelation of a certain and special aspect of truth to set them on the path again. It is wiser therefore to seek to reveal truth rather than to supply personal advice, in order that the one to whom counsel is given may himself choose his own path. It is a very great responsibility to choose for another, or to persuade or influence another unduly, and seldom does it produce the good originally intended.

The idea of true Counsel is that of being led by the Spirit of God, and such as are led by the Spirit of God are indeed the Sons of God.

(4) To Convert.

"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."—(Psalm, 19/7.)

Counsel leads to Conversion: for those who are themselves led by the Spirit of God inspire others to depend upon the Divine, and thus the need of human counsel is transcended.

To convert, as a Spiritual Good Work, does not imply, as is generally understood, the calling of others to some particular form of belief, but rather the restoration of Souls to God. The process is not so much the promulgation of one's own particular beliefs, conceptions, and ideals, but rather a gentle method of leading a Soul to see the eternal Wisdom in or behind the particular ideals that are already cherished. True conversion is a restoration of others to the heights and depths of their own religion, by the revelation of the degree of Truth already contained in them, so that a firm basis

may be established for the understanding and acceptance of fuller and more universal aspects of the One Truth.

Conversion should not be a process of negation and destruction, but rather one of instruction and affirmation. Its primal object is to heal the mind and heart, just as to heal the body is the object of the corresponding Corporeal Good Work.

Behind the Spirit of Conversion lies the Spirit of Understanding whereby the One Truth is recognized and established within the Soul as the permanent basis of all phases of religion and idealism. The recognition of this Unity and Universality is one of the most essential factors necessary in the practice of this Spiritual Good Work, so that all religions may be revealed as parables of truth rather than as mutually destructive or exclusive factions.

The power to convert depends upon a certain fundamental supernatural elevation of mind whereby one is enabled to understand all-varying aspects of truth in many modes of thought and expression and in many systems of science and art, of philosophy and religion. Thus by this same supernatural habit of mind, the reality and reasonableness of the basic underlying truths may be unfolded and demonstrated to those who have failed to perceive and accept them.

(5) To Hope.

"Now the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost."—(Romans, 15/13.)

Hope is the precursor of achievement and attainment, both in oneself and in others.

In proportion as men are inspired with that spirit of confidence and conviction which gives them a certain measure of stability, they are able to go forth each day with the strength of optimism, with hope raised high within them, towards the accomplishment of purpose.

Where there is no faith, there is little hope; but where faith abounds, hope overflows as with abundance.

As a Spiritual Good Work, Hope is the great arouser, awakener, inspirer; and he who can induce in others hopefulness is the remote originator of great deeds.

The basis of hope is in the recognition that life is good, that the Divine Law is just, and that all things are possible to those who have faith.

As with all the other Spiritual Good Works, the fundamental principle lies in the reality of God's immanence, and the certain knowledge and realization that God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence are shed upon mankind.

Those who have hope are strong, fearless, resolute, recollected. They give expression to the hope within them, both by words and deeds, and thus inspire others with renewed aspiration and endeavour.

To hope amidst pain and sorrow and misfortune is to endure. They are best able to comfort and strengthen others, who bear their own burdens with patience and resolution, a deep content pervading their minds, and a sweet resignation tranquillizing their hearts.

And thus, by peaceful and cheerful endurance, they not only bear their own crosses, but help others who are heavy laden to gain the Spirit of Fortitude.

It is the duty of every man to hope, for there is nothing so devastating in its effects as despair. Active hope implies a certain habit of quiet affirmation in the spirit of faith and truth whereby man overcomes obstacles. For in Truth all things are possible, and the first step towards the accomplishment of any purpose must be an unshakeable conviction that it can be compassed.

Those who possess the Spirit of Hope strive with, not against, all obstacles, finding in every form of opposition a hidden lesson, an opportunity for transcendence, and a new means of gaining that perfect mastery towards which all consciously or unconsciously aspire.

(6) To Instruct.

"He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own Soul; but he that hearkeneth to reproof getteth understanding.

The fear of the Lord is the instruction of Wisdom; and before honour goeth humility."—(Proverbs, 15/32, 33.)

The object of knowledge is the illumination of the mind; to enable man rightly to use the powers, processes, and materials around him, and at the same time to understand the

order of the universe, the true nature of the Soul, and its real relationship to God and the Universe.

As a Spiritual Good Work, Instruction has for its primary object the expansion, enlightenment, and upliftment of the consciousness; therefore the process is not so much to impress certain facts upon the mentality as rather to educe latent intellectual potentialities.

To instruct in a spiritual manner requires the Gift of Spiritual Knowledge, but all education in religious truths has a certain degree of spirituality.

Ideas and ideals may be presented to the reason, or to the intuition, or to the will, by revealing their essential Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, and all teaching should be such as to permit the realities imparted to be apprehended in this threefold manner.

One of the principal methods of instruction is by prudent and judicious questioning, so that truths already possessed by the learner are utilized as the foundation for the reception of wider and deeper knowledge. In this manner, too, the latent conceptions of the Soul may be educed, corrected, strengthened, and supplemented.

All men have a message to bear to their fellows.

The whole range of speech and action is a vast system of symbology, bearing messages of wondrous depth and sacred significance to those who are ready to receive them.

One of the secrets of true spiritual instruction is the recognition that both the teacher and learner are seekers, helping each other to perceive the reality of some truth. In this way both he who imparts and he who receives is led into new fields of thought and further aspects of reality.

The true aim of this Spiritual Good Work is prudently to sow such seeds of Spiritual Knowledge as will ripen and mature in the minds of men, and in such a manner and to such a degree as to produce true interior illumination.

### (7) To Revere.

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and His children shall have a place of refuge.

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of Life, to depart from the snares of death."—(Proverbs, 14/26, 27.)

The Spirit of Reverence should accompany all the Spiritual Good Works, for without it their spiritual and inner aspect may be lost, and their ultimate purposes defeated.

As a Spiritual Good Work, Reverence includes the power to awaken the spirit of wonder and veneration in others.

Without this sense of wonder and awe, nothing can be accomplished, perceived, or attained in the right spirit, and in full measure; for from reverential awe springs true Wisdom. There can be no spiritual realization unless a holy spirit of mystery and wonder has enveloped the seeker. Without it everything is perceived in part only; but with it, a sense of greatness and universality fills the aspiring consciousness.

The practice of this Spiritual Good Work implies the bringing of everything into the Presence of God, and also, as it were, the carrying of the Presence of God to all mankind.

The reverential attitude must be a constant state of consciousness, so that everything worthy of it awakens a transcendental wonder in the Soul, which may find its outward expression in adoration and praise.

He who truly practises this beautiful Spiritual Good Work makes all his acts sacramental and significant, so that they all have a Divine as well as a human purpose and meaning. The plenitude of the Divine Nature should flow and overflow in man in order that all human activities may be intensified and transformed by the Divine Touch.

Every being should be treated with due reverence, and the higher that being is in the hierarchy of life, the greater is the degree of reverence that is his due.

By the true practice of a universal reverence, all men are most easily and effectively bound back to God, and by the consequent inspiration of wonder and veneration they are led into the Paths of Wisdom and Love.

"Behold the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom.—(Job, 28/28).

# THE PATH OF UNION BY GOOD WORKS

## § 4. THE PERFECTION OF GOOD WORKS

THE whole object of Karma Marga, the Path of Union by Action and Good Works, is to compel all human activities to help the Soul on its journey to God, by co-ordinating them with the external universe, by harmonizing them with all beings who come within the sphere of their effects, and by correlating them with the Divine in all Its aspects.

The universe is the result of Divine Karma or Activity; hence the Soul's contact with it is an essential factor in the process of unfolding its latent powers and the following of its divine inherent impulse to manifest itself.

The previous sections dealt with the human will and its relations with the Divine Will; with the actions resulting from volition, and their causes and effects; and with the nature of the Good Works performed by voluntary acts.

The present section deals with the factors upon which the perfection of good works depends, or in other words, with the principles whereby these works may be properly ordinated, harmonized, and correlated with the universe, humanity, and God.

The Soul's inherent impulse to manifest is the First and Final Cause of all its activities; this is expressed by the impulsive aspect of the human will. According as this impulse is purely personal, or natural, or spiritual, so is the character of the resulting action.

Personal impulses are those arising from purely human or individual motives which may, or may not, harmonize with the acts of other beings.

Natural impulses follow, more or less closely, the laws of Nature, and, if unaffected by the personal will, they naturally fall into ordination with the external universe.

Spiritual impulses are the promptings that arise as a

consequence of correlating the personal will with the Divine Will.

Although the inherent impulse of the Soul is the First and Final Cause of its activity, this is qualified by the elective aspect of the Will, which, in this sense, is the Efficient Cause, and may be human, or natural, or divine, in its tendency. The more it partakes of the divine the more unitive, infinite, eternal, providential (or super-karmic), and ideal, will be its effects; while the more it follows the dictates of Nature, the more will its effects tend to be multiplex, finite, temporal, karmic, and actual (as contrasted with ideal). As man is a spiritual-corporeal being, his will, considered as the Efficient Cause of his actions, is also spiritual-corporeal. When it verges to the spiritual its effects are akin to the divine, but when it verges to the corporeal, its effects follow the same laws as Nature and the corporeal universe.

If the elective aspect of the Will is the Efficient Cause, then the purposive aspect may be regarded as the Formal Cause, for it is the motive or intention which gives to actions their ultimate form—good or bad, perfect or imperfect.

Here, as with the other aspects, the personal volition usually tends to be detrimental to the effects of good works, whereas impersonal volition (such as when the human will follows only the promptings of the Divine) does not interfere with the effects produced but leaves them entirely in the hands of Providence, which inevitably turns them wholly to Good. The purpose of personal action is mainly self-preservative or self-assertive, but true self-giving is impersonal because the self has no interest, either in the act or in its effects, and the more habitual this becomes the more will the good works performed become spiritualized and perfected. But this is not indifference, neither does it imply that there is no interest at all in activity; there is a very real interest, namely that of becoming a channel for streams of providential grace and serving as an instrument of the Most High.

One of the most convenient modes of considering the means whereby the perfecting of good works may be accomplished is by the right correlation, harmonizing, and disposition of agent and patient, or the actor and object acted upon.

This may be regarded in two ways:—with the human body as the patient, and the Soul as the agent of the Spirit; and with the Soul and its faculties as patient, and the Spirit as the agent of God. The former has more to do with corporeal good works, and the latter with spiritual good works. In the first case the main factors are rightness of time and place and condition, but these factors do not enter so much in the second case because the Spirit is above time and space, and therefore, when the Soul is considered as the patient of Spirit, the factors have to do with the means by which the Soul and all its powers may participate in divine grace which is the consummation of all its works.

The timeliness of the Soul's action upon its own body and upon any other object, is the initial element which decides its immediate effectiveness or otherwise. When an act is either premature or too long withheld, its effectiveness is destroyed or rendered very indefinite and remote, and all other factors can contribute but little influence for good or for bad. For example: to give when the recipient can no longer enjoy the gift is useless; to offer help or service before it is needed is of little avail; to endeavour to heal or comfort when the patient is past human aid and consolation is futile.

In the same way, misplaced works are not fruitful of good, for an inappropriate act is as non-productive of benefit as an inopportune one. For instance, to be markedly courteous when it is known that such conduct might be misconstrued and even taken as an offence, is a misapplication of this good work; while to belittle material and external means for the support of good works, relying only upon spiritual and internal means, militates against integral effectiveness of the ends because of the misplacement of means which these tendencies involve. In Karma Marga everything in the external universe has a legitimate place. For example, physical bodies have their proper place in the scheme of things, but their care and use should not be made a fetish. In like manner, all external forms, customs, and conventions, are good in their right place, and therefore, however much the mind and Soul may aspire to ascend above and beyond external forms and conditions, these things cannot be dispensed with while a person is dwelling in the external universe

with other human beings. Hence, since they are necessary, they should be so recognized. Moreover, aversion to externals and their uses causes attachment to them rather than non-attachment, because the mind immediately attaches itself to whatever it dwells upon, whether animated by thoughts of aversion or of attraction. External forms are transient necessities and there could be no corporeal good works without them. By the right use of forms, the Soul, acting as an agent of Spirit, can spiritualize its works and thus, in consciousness, rise superior to externalities.

Rightness of condition of the patient is the third factor when considering the body as the object which is acted upon. Since the body, of its very nature, is imperfect, and invariably subsists in a condition of greater or lesser defectiveness and deficiency, this factor calls for special attention in the perfection of good works. Experience teaches that, from a purely human standpoint, little or no progress could ever be made in Karma Marga if this were dependent solely upon the disposition, or predisposition, of the physical body. Therefore, it is self-evident that some other elements must be introduced in order to counteract or neutralize the body's inaptitude, disinclination, and disorder. These elements are right dedication and consecration, through which the human body, with all its capacities, becomes correlated and harmonized with the Powers above it, and thus converted into an efficient instrument for the performance of the Soul's good works. The dedication and consecration of an act is effected by a mental declaration accompanied by a volitional affirmation that the reason and intention are sacred and that whatever be the fruits they are handed over wholly to the Divine.

Under these circumstances the Soul, as an agent of Spirit, exercises its prepotency over the body and the conditions thereof, which thus frequently can be transcended, and a good work may be performed even when the transient nature is unfit, or seems most opposed to manifesting the necessary energy.

When the Soul with its faculties is regarded as the patient of the Spirit, the first consideration is the disposition of the

Soul and its instruments of expression, for these latter are the means through which it is to execute the good works of the Spirit. Since these works depend upon Divine Grace for their real effectiveness, it follows that the Soul's faculties must be adapted to act as channels for participating in the Divine. And certain obstacles tend to prevent this.

The primal obstacle to be overcome by the Soul is what might be termed the Rebellion of the personal Will.

In this is the origin not only of sin and inordination but also of falls and failures in Karma Marga. The pride of the self-will, with its consequent lack of reverence and its spirit of false-independence, is a most effective barrier to the reception of any divine influence. In this respect, however, it is of special importance to remember that temptations alone are not necessarily evil. For instance, when there is an opportunity to perform a good work, simultaneously there may be a temptation to leave that work undone. If the will is impulsively rebellious, then probably it will yield to the temptation, but if it elects to do the work, then the actual temptation itself has had a good effect, for it has not only caused the will to be strengthened by making its choice in the face of opposition, but, in addition, through causing the elective and purposive aspects of the will to be exercised, it has afforded an opening for the intervention of the Spirit, on account of the deepened realization of personal impotence which the temptation reveals. In fact, the Soul that is consecrated to Divine Service may grow even to rejoice in its temptations and to cease altogether to fear them, because they perpetually cause the Soul to be recalled to God and thus effectively prevent undue human exaltation.

The next obstacle with which the Soul has to contend is Lack of Faith. A living Faith in the Goodness of Divine Providence is one of the primal requisites for walking the Path of Union by Action, because this is the only power that can counteract the cold and deadening influence of what is called "common-sense," by which here is meant that matter-of-fact mode of reasoning and that absence of altruistic spirit which regard merely what personal profit will accrue from the performance of any particular act, or series of acts. Faith is essential, too, because without it the Soul would not have

confidence to place reliance upon the Powers which are above and beyond its own perception and intelligence, but through which alone its works are rendered effectual.

The third obstacle is Indifference, which is removed by mystical love. This love is not simply emotion but is something much more. It converts the will and gives that permanent devotion to service which is undisturbed by the fluctuations of personal feelings.

When these three obstacles are eliminated, then the volitional, intellectual, and affectional faculties of the Soul become so harmonised that through the agency of the Spirit they function as channels for participation in divine power, wisdom, and love.

But the Holy Spirit utilizes an infinite variety of agencies for re-acting upon the Soul, and the manner in which these operate is disclosed by considering the Sacramental Science. As is often quoted "a Sacrament is an outward and visible Sign of an inward and Spiritual Grace." It requires a receptive attitude of the patient (Soul); the correlation of the patient and the agent (Spirit); and an appropriate symbolical act of the patient which invites the entrance of the Divine Grace through the agency of the Holy Spirit. These three requisites should be present for the perfection of every good work. The recognized ecclesiastical and mystical Sacraments naturally find an important place in Karma Marga, but the grand ideal is to order life in such a way that acts of all kinds are sacramental. This is readily to be done by bearing in mind the above requisites. If these are lacking, then the most elaborate and ceremonial sacrament becomes only an empty form, whereas by their instrumentality the most trivial act is made sacrosanct and becomes highly potent for good.

A true sacrament is a seal which ratifies the efficacy of every good work. Thus, to love may be a sacrament of union; to pray may be a sacrament of penance; to strengthen or to counsel, a sacrament of confirmation; to awaken or to convert, a sacrament of baptism; to impart comfort or hope, a sacrament of unction; to instruct, or to regulate, a sacrament of holy orders; and to revere may be a real sacrament of holy communion.

In the sacramental life, the utility, the reality, and the

beauty of Good Works are each fully manifested and expressed. For a sacrament elevates an action to the ideal plane, and its utility is thus correspondingly enhanced, because the quality of an action and the nature of its karmic, or super-karmic, effects are determined by the dignity of its final cause, by the degree in which the agent is identified with that cause, and by the measure in which the energy operating upon or through the patient corresponds to the activity impelled by the agent.

Good works, sacramentally performed, are the most real things in transient life; all other occupations and personal affairs recede in the background, appearing more and more unreal in comparison. In selfless service the Soul loses itself and breathes the Holy Spirit, rising above time and sense and all their unreal limitations.

All actions are beautified in proportion as they are sacred; for, in a measure, they are shorn of their corporeality, although performed by the corporeal nature in the corporeal universe. Becoming spiritualized, and radiating a mysterious and ineffable influence upon all beings, they elevate and unite the Soul with God, the Supreme Beauty.